

DAY, MARCH 26, 1995
French first
barred entry
Senate building

Clue said found in Tokyo attack

TOKYO (R) — Japanese police have found a secret underground bunker and chemical fingerprints that could link a doomsday cult with last Monday's attack on the Tokyo subway system using a poison gas able to kill millions. The Japanese news agency Kyodo, quoting police sources, reported on Saturday that the bunker was discovered beneath a building in the Aomori Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect) complex in the village of Kamiku Isaki at the foot of Mount Fuji, 100 kilometres west of Tokyo. Kyodo said the chemical evidence was obtained from samples found at the complex. They matched samples taken from the subway and another unresolved incident last July involving the lethal gas sarin. A total of 10 people were killed and thousands were injured in Monday's attack on five rush-hour subway trains. No suspects have yet been detained in the case. Police plan another search at the sect's complex on Sunday using power shovels and excavators to drill holes through concrete to search the secret bunker. The underground facilities could be a prison for keeping sect followers who wished to leave the group, or a secret warehouse, Kyodo said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرائي

JD 15m EIB loan to help water sector

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Investment Bank (EIB) has agreed to extend a loan worth JD 18 million European currency units (JD 15 million) to Jordan to finance seven water and sewerage networks projects. The loan is the largest extended by the bank to Jordan to finance projects carried out by the Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ). WAJ Secretary General Qasbi Qasbiat said the loan will be used to set up waste-water treatment plants at Al Fuhais and Mahab and to replace Mafray city's water network, and other sewerage networks in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid. The EIB, the monetary arm of the European Union, granted Jordan 12 million ECU, \$14.6 million in September 1994 to help improve its water sector. The grant was part of an overall donation of \$36.6 million aimed at cementing Jordan's economic reform programme. The EU is linked to Jordan by a four-year protocol under which it will provide the Kingdom with 126 million ECU's (\$150 million).

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PNA, Israel differ on time

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel, mired in a dispute over implementing their peace deal, have set different dates for summer time. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) announced after its weekly meeting in Jericho on Saturday that it would put clocks forward an hour on April 7 and back again on Sept. 15. The Israeli interior ministry said summer daylight-saving time will begin in Israel at midnight on March 30 and end on Aug. 26.

At least 1 dead in Hizbollah attack

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — The Iranian-backed Hizbollah claimed an explosion in South Lebanon Saturday which it said killed four Israeli militiamen, but which the militia said left one civilian dead. The Islamic Resistance, Hizbollah's armed wing, said it detonated an explosive device near Beit-Lif in Israel's self-declared "security zone" as a convoy of South Lebanon Army (SLA) militiamen passed. The blast killed four including an SLA intelligence services officer, Ali Khalil, and wounded three others, the group said in a statement. An SLA spokesman confirmed the attack but said it targeted civilians with no links to Israel's proxy militia. A 20-year-old man, Hilmi Mustapha, was killed and two other people wounded, the spokesman said.

Iran warns U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran has warned U.S. leaders against taking any military action in the Gulf and said their presence in the region was "aggressive," according to press reports Saturday. "American leaders must be held responsible for the consequences of any action in the region," said Mohammad Javad Larijani, a leading member of the National Security Council, Iran's highest decision-making authority. "The American presence in the region is illegal and aggressive whatever the reason behind it," said Mr. Larijani, quoted by the press. "The Persian Gulf is our garden and maintaining its security is extremely vital for Iran." U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry repeatedly stressed the "danger" posed by Iran to Gulf Arab states during a tour of the region which ended Thursday.

U.S. navy plane ditches in Arabian Sea

MANAMA (AP) — A U.S. Navy plane plunged Saturday in shark-infested waters off Oman, but all 11 personnel on board were swiftly rescued by an Omani air force helicopter. U.S. navy spokesman T. McCrery said the plane, a P-3C Orion, was eight kilometres off the Omani coast when engine problems forced it to ditch in the Arabian Sea at about 1.30 p.m. (0930 GMT). Omani boats also rushed to the scene, but the helicopter got to there first and was able to pluck the victims out of the water within about 10 minutes, he said.

S. Arabia to allow 69,000 Iran Hajj

JEDDAH (AP) — The kingdom has agreed to permit entry to 69,000 Iranians this year to perform the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, an Iranian official said Saturday. The agreement marks the second year running that Iran forgoes demands for an exemption to the maximum number of Muslims it may send on the Hajj. Sultan Shari, head of the Iranian Hajj mission in Jeddah, said the "final number" is in line with an agreement by the world's Muslim countries on a quota of one pilgrim for each thousand inhabitants.

King receives awards in Los Angeles, expresses hope for comprehensive peace

LOS ANGELES (Agencies) — His Majesty King Hussein has expressed hope that full peace in the Middle East will be achieved in all tracks. In a speech he delivered after receiving a peace prize from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, the King said that although there were some forces that oppose peace, the majority of the people yearn for peace and support all efforts to achieve it. King Hussein said Jordan will exert all necessary efforts to secure a dignified and better life for the coming generations. He said that tolerance and understanding among all faiths should be possible and repetition of past tragedies avoided. The King, in the United States primarily for talks with

President Bill Clinton and senior administration officials, toured the Simon Wiesenthal Centre with Her Majesty Queen Noor and their three sons on the first official stop of his North American tour. After visiting the centre's renowned Museum of Tolerance — the first time an Arab head of state has toured the centre's Holocaust exhibit — the King was presented with the centre's peace award — a silver Ram's horn — for his efforts in furthering Middle East peace. "We are here today to honour the heroic and historic stand for peace taken by His Majesty," said the centre's Gary Winnick. King Hussein accepted the award "in the name of all

those in the Middle East who stood and sacrificed in the quest for peace." "I look forward with confidence to a time when the words Arab and Israeli no longer evoke images of strife," he said. The King is scheduled to meet with President Clinton on March 27 in Washington. The two leaders last met during the peace treaty signing on the Jordanian-Israeli border on Oct. 26. American Vice President Al Gore last week promised Jordan that Washington will write off all of the Kingdom's official debt to the United States this year, despite domestic opposition. "I hope our friends con-

(Continued on page 7)

300 Algerian militants killed in huge operation — report

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Security forces Saturday were hunting down hundreds of armed Islamic extremists west of the capital after killing more than 300 of them in what was believed to be the government's biggest operation to date against the militants, the daily Al Watan reported. The report, not immediately confirmed by officials, said it was the army's biggest operation in more than three years against fundamentalist extremists whose insurrection aimed at ousting the military-backed government has killed some 30,000 people, according to U.S. State Department estimates. The paper said the army on Monday ambushed a convoy of more than 400 men on Monday in the Ain Defra region, 150 kilometres west of the capital, after being alerted by residents in the area, a stronghold of fundamentalist guerrillas. By the end of Tuesday, 150 of the extremists had been killed and by Friday the toll stood at more than 300, the paper said, adding that on Saturday forces were tracking down survivors in the thick forest of the mountainous region. Eyewitnesses were quoted as saying the army used heavy weapons in the operation which was backed by

helicopters. When attacked, the extremists were travelling in 30 trucks from Mascara, 350 kilometres southwest of Algiers, to the Algerian capital, planning to "give some strong support to terrorist cells weakened by security services," the newspaper said. Terrorist is the official word used to describe the armed Islamic groups who launched a guerrilla war against the secular, army-backed regime in early 1992 after the cancellation of elections the now-banned Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win. The report gave no details on any losses by security forces. Al Watan did not say if the convoy belonged to the Armed Islamic Group or its rival, the Islamic Salvation Army, whose leader Madani Merzak recently said he had "temporarily" taken over the leadership of the banned Islamic Salvation Front. On Friday, the Arab daily Al Awstat reported fierce clashes between the army and some 450 armed Islamic extremists in the Medea region, 70 kilometres south of Algiers. The Medea area, also wooded and mountainous, connects with the Ain Defra region, near the Ouarsenis

mountain range. That report quoted what it called authoritative sources but made no mention of the date. It said "various sorts of arms" were used. Security forces have stepped up attacks on Islamic militants in recent months. President Liamine Zeroul said on Oct. 30 that attempts to negotiate with the opposition had failed and pledged to "pursue the eradication of terrorism." He also announced presidential elections would be held at the end of this year. Security forces then launched several major offensives against armed Islamic groups which, observers here said, aimed to prevent them disrupting the future election. However, the fundamentalists hit back with spectacular attacks, notably a downtown Algiers police station Jan. 30, killing 42 people and wounding 286. In the past two weeks, attacks have specifically targeted families of police and women. A car bomb at a police housing unit on March 10 wounded 63 people. At least 10 women have been assassinated since then. Al Watan, as is usual now in Algeria's rigorously controlled press, did not mention

(Continued on page 7)

Detained Americans produced in Iraqi court

BAGHDAD (AP) — Despite U.S. appeals for leniency, two Americans went on trial Saturday in Iraq on charges they entered the country illegally. Sources close to the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Americans were represented by an Iraqi lawyer appointed by the state. They said two Polish diplomats who represent U.S. interests in Baghdad were present as observers. The head of the U.S. interest section was not taking phone calls, an aide said. The two men strayed across the border from Kuwait on March 13 when they apparently took a wrong turn while trying to visit a friend with the U.N. force that monitors the frontier. They have been identified as David Dalibert and Bill Barloon. Both were employees of U.S. defence contractors in Kuwait. The press was not informed in advance of the hearing, and the state-run Iraqi News Agency carried no reports about it. Trials in Iraq are conducted before a judge but without a jury. Hearings tend to be spaced several weeks apart. The maximum sentence for violating the Iraqi border is 20 years in jail. The case could further strain relations between Iraq and the United States, which have been at loggerheads over U.N. sanctions that were imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Iraq wants the crippling sanctions lifted, insisting it has complied with resolutions laid down in the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire. But the United States, which has led a campaign to keep the sanctions in place, maintains Iraq is still hiding information about its weaponry. The hearing came two days after Iraq allowed Western diplomats to visit the Americans for the first time. That meeting took place at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, sources said. The diplomats said the men were in good condition. The United States, which has not had diplomatic relations with Iraq since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, has been making contacts about the fate of the men through third parties, including the International Committee of the Red Cross. On Friday, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry had predicted that the men would be tried for what he termed a "simple, innocent blunder."

White House spokesman Mike McCrery termed the men's predicament "the result of an innocent mistake."

Turkish army bids to trap Kurdish rebels in north Iraq

ZAKHO (Agencies) — Turkish forces on Saturday pursued their drive to trap Kurdish rebels inside a 40-kilometre deep swathe of northern Iraq, as aid workers accelerated efforts to pull refugees out of the line of fire. About 35,000 troops, backed by armour, artillery and air power, pursued a hammer-and-anvil strategy designed to root out separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) fighters from border camps used as springboards for attacks inside Turkey. The army said the guerrillas, whom they estimate at 2,500, would soon find themselves caught between the main battle force and commandos inserted further south. Fresh air sorties were being prepared. Colonel Dogu Silahcioglu, spokesman for the general staff, said further bombing raids were expected. "The air operation has not yet begun today, but it will start any time." Prime Minister Tansu Ciller defended the Turkish drive into northern Iraq as a legitimate defence operation against Kurdish guerrillas. In a televised address to the nation, Ms. Ciller said Turkey's "Operation Steel" was an action of "legitimate self-defence" that would be "crowned with success."

She said that Turkey could no longer tolerate attacks on its territory by Turkish Kurds based in northern Iraq. But she repeated previous affirmations that Turkish forces would pull out upon completion of the "limited" operation. In other developments: Turkish military officials said PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan has ordered his forces in Turkey to launch diversionary attacks to undermine Ankara's incursion into northern Iraq. "You must continuously carry out actions to distract the Turkish soldiers (in north Iraq)," one official quoted Mr. Ocalan as saying in a radio message intercepted by the Turkish army. International aid organisations accused Turkish troops of stopping convoys of food and other aid for Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq. Iraqi Kurds added there were severe food shortages and rising gasoline prices since cross-border trade stopped last Monday when Turkey launched its offensive. A U.N. official said aid

workers would contact a Turkish foreign ministry official being sent Saturday to the Turkish Red Crescent office in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk to hear their complaints. — German Labour Minister Norbert Blum accused Turkey of treating Kurds worse than animals. Mr. Blum, a member of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union, said in a newspaper article that he had worked in Turkey in his youth, and had always felt at ease there, until an incident in April 1991. He said he witnessed Turkish troops barring the way a Turkey's border with Iraq, when he said Kurdish refugees from the mountains trying to go down to the plains were dying of hunger and cold. "Since that date, I know that the Turks treat the Kurds as we wouldn't have the right to treat animals," he said. Germany is checking whether Turkey, contrary to its assertions, is using German-supplied weapons in its campaign against the PKK, foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said.

PLO says self-rule talks with Israel remain stalled

JERICO (Agencies) — Senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials will meet in Gaza on Tuesday to discuss how to break a deadlock in talks over an Israeli troop redeployment in the West Bank, a Palestinian official said on Saturday. Yasser Abed Rabbo, who holds the information portfolio in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), said he would head the meeting of the higher negotiations committee. "The halt in the peace talks does not cover only redeployment but other issues as well such as transferring customs powers in the West Bank to Palestinians," he said. Mr. Abed Rabbo spoke to reporters after a weekly meeting of the PNA, which met in Jericho on Saturday for only the second time since the PLO took control of the West Bank town and the Gaza Strip last July under its peace deal with Israel. Palestinians accuse Israel of delaying implementation of the second phase of self-rule in the West Bank, which includes an Israeli troop redeployment ahead of Palestinian elections, now nine months behind schedule. Saeb Erakat, a PNA member, said Israel and the PLO will meet in Cairo on Tuesday to resume negotiations

on holding Palestinian elections. Dr. Erakat and Yoel Singer, legal advisor at the Israeli foreign ministry, would take part in the negotiations, Dr. Erakat told journalists. Dr. Erakat said he would meet Mr. Singer in Jericho on Sunday to prepare for more talks in Cairo. The PLO and Israel set a July 1 deadline to agree on expansion of Palestinian authority to the West Bank. Israel halted progress on interim arrangements in the West Bank following a series of armed attacks against Israelis by militant groups opposed to peace. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Thursday that the July 1 deadline hinged on the PNA's ability to curb attacks against Israelis. Mr. Abed Rabbo said: "It seems for the Israeli prime minister the whole peace process is not sacred. The peace process is halted now because Israelis are using violence as a pretext to justify delaying implementation of the interim accord."

He said the PNA also discussed on Saturday Israel's proposal for physically separating Palestinians and Israelis. The plan, aimed at stopping guerrilla attacks in Israel, is due to be put to the Israeli government next week. Mr. Arafat said meanwhile he has asked U.S. President Bill Clinton to exert pressure on Israel and push for a speedy Israeli troop withdrawal from West Bank towns. He spoke after the PNA meeting here. Mr. Arafat said he complained about the delays when he met Friday with U.S. Vice President Al Gore in Jericho. "We discussed with Al Gore all the obstacles that are delaying the implementation... and we asked him and Mr. Clinton to put pressure on Israel to speed the implementation of the agreement," Mr. Arafat told reporters. Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani said the Americans apparently shared some of the Palestinian concerns. "We got the impression from Mr. Gore that the Americans are worried about the peace process and the fate of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations," Mr. Kanafani said. Israel and the PLO reportedly have been negotiating quietly in the past few weeks, but Mr. Kanafani said the difficulties remained. "We are not close to an agreement," he told reporters. "I wished we could say yes."



Former U.S. First Lady Nancy Reagan applauds His Majesty King Hussein after presenting him with the Ronald Reagan Freedom Award on Friday at the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California (AFP photo)

U.S. backs proposal for \$4 b Iraqi oil sales

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Facing growing pressure to ease sanctions against Iraq, the United States is backing a proposal that would allow Baghdad to sell \$4 billion of oil a year to pay for food and medicine, a U.S. official said.

Although Iraq has repeatedly complained that the U.N. economic sanctions have led to widespread suffering, it was unclear if Baghdad would agree to the conditions in the proposal, which the Security Council is to discuss next week.

Under the proposal, Iraq could spend half the money from the oil sales on food and medicine, the U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. But 30 per cent would be used to compensate Gulf war victims and 20 per cent to aid U.N. humanitarian operations in largely Kurdish northern Iraq.

Further, to ensure that the money is used for humanitarian supplies and not to support the government, a monitoring system would be established, the U.S. official said. Iraqi officials were not immediately available for comment.

The sanctions, including the oil embargo, were imposed after Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United Nations previously authorised a one-time Iraqi oil sale of \$1.6 billion, but Iraq refused the offer, saying the strict U.N. supervision would infringe on its sovereignty.

The Security Council renewed its sanctions against Iraq earlier this month. But Russia and France, eager to pursue lucrative contracts with Iraq, have been urging the council to ease the oil embargo if Iraq complies with U.N. weapons inspectors. A report from the officials is expected in mid-April.

The United States and Britain are demanding that the sanctions not be eased until Iraq improves its human rights record and accounts for missing Kuwaiti equipment.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was quoted on Friday as saying that American policies towards Iraq were a threat to stability of the Gulf.

"The current United States

policy towards Iraq is an element which threatens the stability of the Gulf region and is creating a more dangerous situation than the one which existed before the war," Mr. Aziz was quoted as telling Vatican radio.

Mr. Aziz met Pope John Paul last week and asked the Vatican to put pressure on the international community to ease the sanctions.

When asked to elaborate on the risks to security in the region, Mr. Aziz said: "First of all there is the Iranian threat. Then the general sense of frustration across almost all the region which many international newspapers covering the situation have noted."

"Then there is the continual growth of extremism, which you call Islamic fundamentalism, but which I prefer to call extremism and which I believe has more to do with the political and social situation than religion."

Mr. Aziz said Iraq could play an important role in furthering peace in the Gulf, as one of the most populous states and second largest oil producer among the Arab states.

But first, he said, the United Nations needed to lift sanctions.

According to the Iraqi oil sales plan proposed by governments of the U.S., Argentina and Britain, in the form of a resolution, Iraq would be allowed to sell up to \$1,000 million worth of oil every 90 days. The money from the sales would go into an escrow account to be disbursed as follows: \$300 million to the U.N. Compensation Fund to pay for Iraq's war debts, \$200 million to U.N. and private agencies for humanitarian supplies for the Kurds in northern Iraq, and the remaining \$500 million to Iraq to be used for the purchase and distribution of food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies, the official said.

The original plan, specified in resolutions 706 and 712 in 1991, provided for a one-time sale — to be strictly monitored by the U.N. — of \$1,000 million worth of oil over a six-month period. After sporadic negotiations between U.N. and Iraqi officials,

however, went all out to win the war, wheeling in the big guns in the shape of Defence Secretary William Perry, whose tour of the Gulf coincided with the arms show.

At every opportunity Mr. Perry voiced U.S. concerns at the threat posed by Iran in the Gulf region and for the first time accused Tehran of deploying chemical weapons.

He also said Tehran had moved 6,000 troops to islands in the mouth of the Gulf and concentrated anti-shiping and anti-aircraft missiles in the region, threatening the shipping.

U.S. Vice-President Al Gore called on Gulf states to work with Washington to counter the threat posed by Iran and Iraq.

Iran hit back angrily at Mr. Perry's accusations dismissing them as "a sales pitch" to win military contracts.

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Under the new proposal, Iraq would be allowed to sell \$1,000 million worth of oil every 90 days provided that it continues to comply with the conditions of the resolution, a U.S. official said. "This is the key — if everything works at the end of 180 days it's renewable... If the system works, Iraq could get up to \$4,000 million a year."

Iraq had complained that under the earlier plan the oil would be allowed to go through the Turkish pipeline, which they thought was unacceptable. The current resolution stipulates that the bulk of the oil should go through that pipeline but the remainder can go through the Mina Al Bakr oil terminal near Basra, the official said.

"On the issue of intrusiveness of monitoring, we've changed from distribution monitoring... to impact monitoring, which is less intrusive," the official said.

"We are still insisting that the goods go to the people who need them, not to the regime, but in the interest of making the system less intrusive the resolution would ask the secretary general to establish a means to measure the impact of these deliveries," the official explained.

"In other words, rather than the U.N. or some NGO (non-governmental organisation) buying and distributing the supplies, the Iraqis get to do it, but the United Nations measures the impact to ensure that the goods are indeed going to those who need it."

As with the previous oil sale resolution, the council is expected to act without seeking any reaction from Baghdad. Following a decision by the council, Iraq would have to decide whether to accept the new U.N. terms.

"All this boils down to is the political will in Baghdad. If they want to earn hard currency to pay for food, medicine and needed supplies for their people, they can take the steps necessary and take 'yes' for an answer," the U.S. official said.

Four people, including a 12-year-old boy, have died from cholera in a small settlement of Hargeisa Jerey in southern Somalia over the last week and dozens more are afflicted with bilharzia and malaria.

"There is hardly any medical support here. People are likely to die from any illness," said a nurse at the settlement.

Rains have begun in southern Somalia but this settlement in the fertile Jubba Valley still has no needs to plant and so must hope for hand-outs from foreign relief agencies after the next harvest time is due.

"Many of us decided to move because the Kenyan government was closing down refugee camps. Ultimately, you decide that home is better than anywhere

else," said 56-year-old Ahmad Hassan.

Mr. Hassan said Hargeisa Jerey had grown to 600 families (about 2,400 people) in the last three months from just about a dozen families previously.

People are flocking back to other settlements such as Gadudey, Marete and Magac Der, said international committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) field delegate Boris Michel.

Mr. Hassan said there were many refugees returning from Kenya. Most were trapped at the Somalia border town of Doble, where they had stayed months without transport to move inland — while others waited for fresh food rations.

Hargeisa Jerey is 60 kilometres from Somalia's coastal city of Kismayu. It is a collection of 60 to 70 new houses — structures built with sticks and roofed with plastic sheeting provided by Mr. Michel's ICRC field team.

On Friday, the ICRC flew mosquito nets, plastic sheets

and fishing nets to returnees to help them settle in.

"These are basic items the returnees need to settle in. This place has been completely empty of any assistance. People get back having nothing to start with. The only thing they have is hope," said Mr. Michel.

A youth trying to coordinate a school programme there said he had "no chalk, no blackboard, no books, nothing..."

The Kenyan government has in the last two years closed down most of the camps dotting its coastal strip and the north, which once teamed with close to 500,000 refugees.

Relief workers say refugees have felt more obliged to leave after the Kenyan government this month said it wanted the U.N. refugee agency to repatriate all refugees still in the nation.

"It is good to struggle on your own... so many Somalis are now on the move back home," said Mr. Hassan, dignified in his tattered clothes.

The sale of the troop carriers would contribute to U.S. security interests "by helping Lebanon enhance its capability to provide for their own security and defence," according to the Pentagon.

It said no private company is involved as the carriers would be sold from excess U.S. military stocks in Europe.

Saudi Arabia wants to buy an estimated \$690 million worth of weapons including 130 turret guns for light armoured vehicles and 195,000 rounds of ammunition to modernise its National Guards, the Pentagon said.

It said the primary suppliers would be Cockerill Mechanical Industries of Belgium and General Motors of Canada.

Kuwait wants to buy 1,015 Tow-20 anti-tank missiles for its Apache helicopters at an estimated cost of \$32 million, it said. The prime contractor would be Hughes Aircraft Co.

Other flights (Terminal 2)

12:25 Frankfurt, Paris (RJ) 08:20 Cairo (MS) 08:30 Athens (RJ) 12:30 Amsterdam (KL)

Other flights (Terminal 1)

06:30 Agaba (RJ) 06:45 Beirut (RJ) 06:50 Frankfurt (RJ) 06:55 Vienna (RJ) 07:00 Athens (RJ) 07:05 Doha (RJ) 07:10 Cairo (RJ) 07:15 Jeddah (RJ) 07:20 Abu Dhabi (RJ) 07:25 Bahrain (RJ) 07:30 London (RJ) 07:35 Madrid (RJ) 07:40 Rome (RJ) 07:45 Vienna (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 2)

07:30 Rome (AZ) 13:30 Doha, Muscat (GF)

Cyprus displays Exocets

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Cyprus on Saturday put on display Exocet missiles at a military parade here to refute allegations by a French weekly that the weapons had been transferred to Iran.

Five MM-40 Exocet missiles were shown at the Greek Independence Day parade, out of 24 delivered between April and December 1994. A government spokesman said all of them could not be exhibited for security reasons.

"The appearance of the sophisticated missiles in the parade ended allegations by the French weekly L'Express that advanced Exocet shore-to-sea missiles flown to Cyprus last October were secretly shipped on to Iran," the official Cyprus New Agency reported.

Four of the missiles were mounted vertically on two vehicles and the fifth was in its casing on the back of a lorry.

L'Express said a plane from Algeria picked up missiles in France and flew them

Somali refugees return from Kenya to nothing

HARGEISA JEREY, Somalia (R) — Somali refugees have been forced to hit the road for home as camps are closed down in neighbouring Kenya — but they are returning to a wasteland of disease and death.

Four people, including a 12-year-old boy, have died from cholera in a small settlement of Hargeisa Jerey in southern Somalia over the last week and dozens more are afflicted with bilharzia and malaria.

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Kuwait wants to buy 1,015 Tow-20 anti-tank missiles for its Apache helicopters at an estimated cost of \$32 million, it said. The prime contractor would be Hughes Aircraft Co.

Other flights (Terminal 2)

12:25 Frankfurt, Paris (RJ) 08:20 Cairo (MS) 08:30 Athens (RJ) 12:30 Amsterdam (KL)

Other flights (Terminal 1)

06:30 Agaba (RJ) 06:45 Beirut (RJ) 06:50 Frankfurt (RJ) 06:55 Vienna (RJ) 07:00 Athens (RJ) 07:05 Doha (RJ) 07:10 Cairo (RJ) 07:15 Jeddah (RJ) 07:20 Abu Dhabi (RJ) 07:25 Bahrain (RJ) 07:30 London (RJ) 07:35 Madrid (RJ) 07:40 Rome (RJ) 07:45 Vienna (RJ)

Other flights (Terminal 2)

07:30 Rome (AZ) 13:30 Doha, Muscat (GF)

NEWS IN BRIEF

50 wounded in soccer violence in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Fifty people were injured when two villages in northern Egypt fought with knives, axes and gas-bottles over a shared football pitch, the daily Al Wafd reported Friday. Twenty homes and stables were also destroyed as inhabitants from San Saft and Abu Daud battled to get their youngsters a game on the field, which is situated mid-way between the two villages. The violence erupted Thursday just after a match between youngsters from Abu Daud in the province of Menufiya, 80 kilometres north of Cairo. Amid the uproar crops were uprooted over an area of four hectares. Police broke up the clashes and sealed off the villages. Al Wafd said.

Triumphal comeback for Iranian singer

LONDON (AFP) — Iran's best-known songstress Marziyeh made a triumphal comeback here on Friday after a break of 15 years imposed by the Iranian Islamic regime which bans women from singing in public. Wearing a traditional long gown, Marziyeh, 70, was given a long ovation at the end of her performance by an audience largely made up of Iranian exiles. Of around 20 songs which she sang accompanied by the London Festival Orchestra and by traditional Iranian musicians, many were in praise of freedom, human rights and the oppressed women of her homeland. She left Iran last September for France after living for years as a recluse outside Tehran. She is a vocal supporter of the armed opposition Mujahadeen fighting the theocratic regime of the mullahs. After her triumph in London, Marziyeh plans a series of concerts elsewhere in Europe and in the United States.

U.S. will block Libyan move to Security Council

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States will block Libya from gaining a seat on the U.N. Security Council, a U.S. official said Friday. Libya apparently has been pushing for membership on the 15-nation council, which makes key U.N. decisions and is responsible for peacekeeping. "We think it would be particularly inappropriate to have Libya on the Security Council and we intend to take all necessary steps... to see that this does not happen," said James P. Rubin, spokesman for the U.S. mission. Libya is under U.N. economic and political sanctions for refusing to turn over for trial in Britain or the United States two Libyans charged with the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. The council has five permanent members — the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain — and 10 members chosen from regional groups on a rotating basis. Those seats are held for two years.

Divorce parties a disgrace, Imam says

CAIRO (AFP) — A religious leader has condemned parties thrown by the stars of Egyptian cinema to celebrate their divorces, the daily Al Misraa reported Friday. The parties usually take place in Cairo's grand hotels where the recently divorced stars receive the congratulations of their colleagues accompanied by the ululation of women traditionally chanted on a wedding day. But the imam of Al Hussein mosque in Cairo, Sheikh Ahmad Farahat, said: "These acts are regrettable and shameful" describing the stars who hold such parties as "devils." The paper did not give the names of the actresses having organised such celebrations.

Thousands turn out for Algerian funeral

ALGIERS (AFP) — Government ministers and many of modern Algeria's founding fathers led thousands of mourners attending the funeral Friday of an independence war hero's son assassinated by suspected Islamic extremists. Four ministers and several former leaders of the war of independence against France were among the crowd mourning at the funeral of Abdoulkader Ben Boulaid, 50, eldest son of war hero Mohammed Ben Boulaid. Ben Boulaid, an economics professor at Algiers University, was killed along with his friend Mohammed Benkouba, 77, as he was on his way to attend a ceremony commemorating the 39th anniversary of his father's death late Wednesday. His father, one of nine "historic" heroes of Algeria's war for independence, was killed in 1956 by a bomb hidden in a radio parachute by the French into nationalist-controlled territory. Veterans of the 1954-1962 war of independence and their relatives are among the foremost targets of Islamic extremists fighting to oust the military-backed government for the past three years. Last year 122 of them were assassinated, according to official figures.

French defence minister to visit Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — French Defence Minister Francois Leotard will arrive in Kuwait Monday for a one-day visit to sign a deal to supply gunboats to the emirate, a Kuwaiti defence official told AFP Saturday. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah announced during a visit to France last month that Kuwait had agreed to buy eight gunboats from France in a deal worth 2.3 billion francs (\$460 million). The gunboats, equipped with missiles, are to be built by the French manufacturer Construction Mecaniques de Normandie (CNM).

Mandela to tour Gulf states

ABU DHABI (AFP) — South African President Nelson Mandela will tour several Gulf countries from April 9 to 12, the South African embassy here said Saturday. Earlier a presidential spokesman in Cape Town said Mr. Mandela would visit Kuwait and several other Gulf states from March 26 to April 2. The embassy here said Mr. Mandela would visit Kuwait and Bahrain, but did not say how long he would stay in each country. It will be Mr. Mandela's first visit to the region.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:00 Le Prince La Sirene
17:30 Pyramide
18:00 Tour Du Monde Tour Du Ciel
19:00 News In French
19:15 Ushuaia
19:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
20:30 Almost Home
21:00 The Album Show
21:30 Heartbeat
22:00 News in English
22:30 The Hidden Room

PRAYER TIMES

04:11 Sunrise
05:29 Sunrise
11:42 Dhuhr
15:11 Asr
17:55 Maghrib
19:12 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish, Tel. 510740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 637785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622566

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628443
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assam International Church Tel. 625256
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684193
The Lutheran-Sabote Tel. 654952
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Cold weather conditions will continue to prevail with scattered showers expected at intervals and skies partly cloudy. Weather is expected to become stable in the afternoon and winds northwesterly moderate to active. In Agaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers. Winds will be northerly active and seas choppy.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 49

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Agaba 10/21
Deserts 2/12
Jordan Valley 8/16

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 7, Agaba 21 Humidity
readings: Amman 98 per cent,
Agaba 32 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Ghaleb Zawaidh 736011
Dr. Walid Al Masri 674585
Dr. Hisham Karam 790286
Dr. Jamal Jorash 347351
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 676255
Nairouz pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 636750
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shimash pharmacy 637660
Nairouz pharmacy 625672
Najib pharmacy 947632
BRID:
Dr. Fayez Al Qadi 248743
Alquds pharmacy (-)

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Kasbi Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 626800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Rescue 632101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power
Company 636381

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldil Maternity, J. Amn 64241/2
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 642362
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Maltes, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisai 66417/4
Shmeisai Hospital 669131
University Hospital 645843
Al-Mawardi Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Jafan, Al-Muhsin 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marfa 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602249/0
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)900560
Al-Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IBRA:
Princess Basmah Hospital (02)275555
Great Cedar Hospital (02)272755
Jbe Al-Nafes Hospital (02)947100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)914111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS



REGENT VISITS MAYOR: His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, the Regent, Saturday visits the Greater Amman Municipality where he is received by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi and senior municipality officials.

Parliamentary team heads for Madrid IPU conference

AMMAN (J.T.) — A parliamentary delegation headed by Lower House of Parliament Speaker Saad Hayel Sour Saturday left Amman for Madrid to take part in the International Parliamentary Union's (IPU) 93rd conference which will open on March 27.

The delegation includes Senator Salem Masaadeh, deputies Mobammad Al Zaben and Abdullah Ensour, Parliament Secretary Hakem Khair, and Faysel Shawabkeh of the parliament's General Secretariat.

Another parliamentary delegation is scheduled to start a European tour March 26. The tour, at the invitation of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and in cooperation with Urdun Al Jadid Centre, will include Germany, Belgium and France.

The delegation consists of nine members of the Lower House office, the director of the office of the Speaker of the Lower House, and five political researchers.

The group will be joined at the end of the journey by the speaker of the Lower House and the Secretary General of the Parliament.

The first week is designed to acquaint the delegation with the working methods of the German Bundestag (and its committees) and to have exchanges on political issues with members of the German Federal Parliament and high-ranking officials at the ministries of foreign affairs and of economic development cooperation. The delegates will be received by Professor Rita Suessmuth, president of the Bundestag.

At the end of the first week, the delegation will pay a visit to the District Council of Enskirchen.

At the beginning of second week, political talks are scheduled at the European Commission in Brussels.

After a short stay in Stuttgart, where parliamentary work at the level of the Federate State of Baden-Wuerttemberg will be on the programme, the delegation will proceed to Strasbourg for the last part of the visit.

Information about the working methods of the European Parliament and political talks with its members are scheduled as well as the visit to the European Commission of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe. The president of the European Parliament will receive the Jordanian delegation.

JPA chief, visiting Algerian parliamentarians discuss stopping violence against journalists

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Press Association (JPA) President Suleiman Qudah, who is also president of the International Journalists Association (IJO) Saturday met with the head of a visiting Algerian parliamentary delegation, Hussein Haidar, and discussed the problem of attacks against Algerian journalists and writers in that country.

Mr. Qudah expressed the Jordanian, Arab and world journalists' solidarity with their Algerian colleagues who are being targeted by Islamist groups.

More than 29 Algerian journalists have been killed so far in the conflict between the Algerian government and Islamist militant groups.

Mr. Qudah issued an appeal to all government and popular forces in Algeria to support journalists and protect them, to enable them to carry out their national and humanitarian duty freely within the context of a national dialogue.

The head of the delegation, which arrived in Amman Wednesday, expressed the solidarity of the Algerian National Transitional Council with journalists and its rejection of violence, stressing that his country's official and private institutions were working diligently to stop violence and assassinations.

targeting several sectors in the Algerian society, namely journalists and writers.

He stressed that a responsible national dialogue would be the only means to rid Algeria of its problems.

Mr. Haidar called on the Jordanian and Arab press to support such a movement.

The IJO recently set up a committee to investigate the attacks and assassinations in Algeria against journalists. It has also granted its annual 1994 award to one of the Algerian journalists killed in the conflict.

Also Saturday, the delegation was received by rapporteur of the Lower House of Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee, Hammad Ahn Jamous.

Mr. Ahn Jamous said Jordanians were following with concern incidents in Algeria, voicing hope that the Algerian people will resolve the conflict through serious national dialogue which will involve all the concerned parties.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Majid Azzam and several members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Also Saturday, Deputy Prime Minister and Information Minister Khaled Karaki met with the delegation and stressed the keenness of His



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Khaled Karaki, accompanied by an Algerian parliamentary delegation headed by Hussein Haidar (Petra photo)

Majesty King Hussein that Algeria find stability and security.

Dr. Karaki said he hoped that Algeria will be able to overcome its current crisis through dialogue.

The information minister briefed the delegation on Jordan's democratisation process and its drive to promote pluralism and human rights.

Mr. Haidar lauded King Hussein's stands on pan-Arab issues and voiced

Algeria's appreciation of the Jordanian leadership's pursuit to mend Arab fences.

He also voiced his country's appreciation of Jordan's stands supporting Algeria in the past and at present, lauding the democratisation process and saying it can be a good example to the Algerian people.

Dr. Karaki and Mr. Haidar discussed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them.

Dr. Karaki welcomed opening an office for the Algerian news agency in Amman.

The meeting was attended by Ministry of Information Secretary General Nayef Maulla, Director General of the Radio and Television Corporation Ihsan Ramzi, Director General of the Jordan News Agency Abdullah Utom and Algerian Ambassador in Amman Hashemi Qaddouri.



Scene of a road accident in which five people were injured Saturday near the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The accident took place when the driver of a diesel tanker heading from the Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein Circle to Jamal Abdul Nasser Circle lost control of his vehicle because he was speeding and slammed into a taxi which in turn hit an electricity pole on the street divider. The pole fell on a car on the other side of the divider. The injured were listed in good condition except for a 10-year-old who was reported to have lost an eye (Petra photo)

Seminar participants call for national road safety council

AMMAN (Petra) — Participants at a seminar on road accidents which concluded in Amman Saturday recommended the establishment of a national council for road safety which will coordinate among all departments and institutions concerned to draw up plans for road safety measures and systems.

The participants also called for adopting a comprehensive national plan to educate the public on traffic rules and stem accidents by cooperating with the media.

They also stressed the need to amend the obligatory insurance system.

They called for an educational strategy to introduce traffic education as a subject in schools and organising field visits for students to get on-site traffic education.

In addition, they stressed the need to tackle the problem of traffic congestion.

Representatives of several government and private institutions participated in the seminar which was organised by the Arab Youth Forum at Al Hussein Youth City's Palace of Culture.

These institutions were the Amman Municipality, the Traffic Department, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the Insurance Companies Federation and the National Society for the Prevention of Road Accidents.

Tarek Bisharat of the Amman Municipality presented a working paper in which he said road accidents in the Kingdom rose from 1,838 in 1970 to 15,734 in 1994.

She attributed the increase to the rise in living standards.

Arfan Gharghar of the Ministry of Public Works presented a working paper on road designs and their effects on accidents. Mr. Gharghar, an engineer, focused on the

DAM BUILDING: Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat Saturday signs an agreement with representatives of a consortium of local and foreign consultancy firms to build Al Adasiyah Dam which will be used to divert water from the Yarmouk River to the King Abdullah Canal in the Jordan Valley. Under the JD 435,000-agreement, the consortium will offer consultancy services and prepare the designs for the dam whose capacity will be one million cubic metres. The dam will also be used to divert flood waters to other dams in the Jordan Valley or to those which are to be constructed, including the proposed Al Karamah Dam, expected to hold 45 million cubic metres of water.



More rain, clouds expected through mid-day

AMMAN (J.T.) — Intermittent rains and cloudy weather are expected to continue today until mid-day, and there will be a possibility of light snow in high mountain areas, meteorologist Qassem Tarawneh said Saturday.

A rise in temperatures is expected Monday and Tuesday, he said.

Rains fell in various parts of the Kingdom Friday and Saturday, intermittently, with sleet in the higher parts of Amman.

The maximum rainfall recorded by the Meteorology Department until 8 a.m. Saturday was in downtown Amman at 22.1 mm.

French travel industry group eyes Jordan with \$55m plan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — One of Europe's largest hotel and travel groups is currently negotiating with the Social Security Corporation (SSC) and a number of other local investors to begin projects in Jordan.

The French-owned ACCOR Group has a \$55 million investment plan for Jordan if negotiations are successful, said Jacques Laugier, chairman of the board for ACCOR.

ACCOR has been studying the Jordanian tourism market for a year, said Mr. Negre, and "we feel that there are opportunities for hotels and tourism in Jordan."

"Our findings after our

study are that the country is exceptional in terms of opportunity because it is stable and well-managed, while at the same time there is a problem of promotion," Mr. Negre explained during a press conference Tuesday. "All that this country offers to tourists is not known outside Jordan."

The ACCOR group is well positioned to promote Jordan worldwide, he said, considering that ACCOR owns 4,000 travel agencies worldwide.

"Through our own agencies we will be able to help promote Jordan," he said. In addition to its travel agencies, ACCOR owns 2,250 hotels worldwide (traditional, budget and resort), public restaurants and car rental agencies and

offers business services such as service vouchers and institutional catering facilities.

As part of the first phase of its strategy in Jordan, ACCOR has plans for four four-star hotels in Amman, Aqaba, Petra and the Dead Sea with 400 rooms each.

"We know that people in the Middle East want to be in five-star hotels," said Mr. Negre, although profitability can be at four-star and three-star levels. ACCOR's experience at all levels, one- to five-stars, enables them to adapt to the local market needs.

The plan for the hotels in Jordan are the first stage of the company's plans for further activity here, although Mr. Negre would not elaborate on any other.

He did say, however, that the company's activities in Jordan were part of a regional strategy.

ACCOR currently owns 27 hotels in Egypt, four in Turkey and is looking to expand into Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas as well as Jordan.

ACCOR does not have hotels in Israel, Mr. Negre said, but is currently finalising a joint venture with an Israeli company. "We are also working hard on a project in the Palestinian areas," he said, adding that the company's plan is for one hotel in Jericho and one in Gaza.

Mr. Negre said that ACCOR gives Jordan high marks for its investment law despite the complaints lodged against them. "We

really don't have complaints," he said, "because Jordan is a law-abiding, stable and well-managed country in safe surroundings — it's very good for investment. Not all countries in the area are like this."

Mr. Negre and ACCOR Vice-President Andre-Patrick Jung said that after speaking with Minister of Tourism Abdul Ilah Khatib they were confident that prospects for tourism in Jordan were improving.

"We have the impression that the minister has a very good knowledge of the problems facing tourism," said Mr. Negre. "And we feel that the Jordanians are doing their best to improve the infrastructure for tourism. It is improving."

Czech children's art to go on display at RCC

AMMAN (J.T.) — A collection of prize-winning paintings by children of the Czech Republic will open to the public Monday at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC).

The exhibition, to be displayed for two weeks, toured Europe last year, with exhibitions in Austria, France, Germany and Switzerland.

Entitled "The Colourful World," the exhibition consists of children's graphic art and is presented by Euroartier, an independent non-profit making society for culture and artistic cooperation.

A statement issued by the Czech embassy said graphic art has become a tradition within the republic. There are schools specialised in teaching children the basic theoretical and practical background of graphic art. It added that many children

participate in competitions including Alsava Zeme (the Ales country) competition, which is named after Mikolas Ales, a famous Czech painter of the 19th century.

Also held in the republic is an international children's exhibition called the "Lidice."

Past exhibitions have featured works by Jordanian children and the exhibition has gained worldwide recognition, the statement said.

In their paintings children depict their activities, their environment and the customs and traditions of their countries.

The exhibition here will be the third Czech cultural event to take place in the Kingdom in seven months.

Earlier this month the Prague Chamber Ballet staged two differing performances on two consecutive nights at the RCC. The ballet proved a huge success: audience members filled the main theatre, not leaving a single seat vacant and many were prepared to stand and watch.

The Czech embassy in Amman is keen to promote cultural exchange between the two countries to create a better understanding of one another's culture.

The exhibition at the RCC will be open to the public from March 30 to April 13 between the hours of 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.

Business delegation to leave for economic talks in Denmark, France

AMMAN (Petra) — A 25-member delegation representing the Jordanian Businessmen's Association (JBA) Tuesday will start a visit to Denmark and France to hold talks with representatives of economic institutions in the two countries.

The delegation, headed by association President Hamdi Tahbaa, will participate in a conference on investment opportunities in Jordan and Denmark.

The association will present two working papers at the conference on the investment climate in Jordan and the Middle East. The papers will be presented by JBA Vice-President Fakhri Bilbeisi and Secretary Thabet Taher.

The Danish International Consultation Services office in Amman will present another paper at the conference on investments in Jordan.

The Danish side will present two papers on prospects

of cooperation between Jordan and Denmark in environmental fields, and cooperation between the two countries in educational and infrastructure projects.

The Jordanian delegation will visit various Danish institutions and meet with their representatives to discuss the prospect of enhancing cooperation between the two sides through the launching of joint ventures.

The delegation will head for France on April 1 to attend the second meeting of the joint Jordanian-French Business Council which was established last year.

The delegation will present two working papers at the meeting dealing with Jordan's growing economic role in the region within the framework of the peace process and Jordanian-French cooperation in the era which will follow the lifting of the U.N.-imposed sanctions on Iraq.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

★ Film entitled "Lean on Me" at the American Center at 5:00 p.m.

LECTURE

★ Lecture (in Arabic) entitled "The Legal Sides on the Right of Return for Palestinian Deportees and Those Who Lost Return Permits" by Ahmad Al Ruwaidi at Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of oil paintings by Hamoud Chantout at the Balqa' Art Gallery, Fuhais.

★ Exhibition of oil paintings by Yusef Badawi at Alia Art Gallery.

★ Exhibition of art by Ahmad Al Babili and Mohammad Ali at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art.

★ Exhibition of books dealing with Arab and Islamic subjects at Instituto Cervantes (the Spanish Cultural Centre).

Save water every drop counts!

Japan police step up efforts to find doomsday cult leader

TOKYO (R) — Japanese police Saturday stepped up efforts to find Shoko Asahara, the elusive head of doomsday cult Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect) which has been linked to lethal nerve-gas attacks on Tokyo's subway.

Police also impounded about 200 more barrels of toxic chemicals in the fourth day of raids at sect buildings.

Meanwhile, in a new video message to followers, Mr. Asahara, 40, again denied allegations the group was behind last Monday's attacks, and accused U.S. troops in Japan of spraying him and hundreds of his followers with nerve gas.

The National Police Agency (NPA) asked Japan's 47 prefectural police authorities to confirm the whereabouts of Mr. Asahara.

Police want to ask Mr. Asahara why his sect owned hundreds of tonnes of toxic chemicals — including all the

constituents of the lethal gas sarin, used in the subway attack which killed 10 and injured thousands.

On Saturday police said five bags used in the attacks were made of a rare industrial plastic, and that this could lead them to the cultists.

No suspects have so far been named in the attack. At the sect's complex in the village of Kamiku Isshiki near Mt. Fuji, 100 kilometres west of Tokyo, about 400 police with chemical warfare gear entered the premises and took away barrels marked "phosphorus trichloride" and "poison."

Phosphorus trichloride has been identified as a key ingredient of sarin. Police also found chemicals used to make nitroglycerin and dynamite, and the stimulant drug amphetamine.

Police sources said they have now found several hundred tonnes of some 40 different chemicals at sect build-

ings. The 10,000-member Aum Shinri Kyo sect says the chemicals were used for making pottery. No pots were found.

In the new video message, broadcast at Aum Shinri Kyo branches, Mr. Asahara said U.S. troops sprayed him and hundreds of followers with nerve gases including sarin. "We have been sprayed with poisonous gases," Mr. Asahara said in the video, obtained by Kyodo News Agency.

"The gas was sprayed by U.S. troops, unmistakably," alleged the cult gure, without saying how or when.

The U.S. embassy in Tokyo said a similar accusation made Friday was unworthy of comment.

Details of conditions Aum Shinri Kyo followers had to endure also started to emerge Saturday. A 23-year-old woman freed by police earlier this week told of being held in a dark shipping container and barred from using the

bathroom after saying she wanted to leave the sect.

A male former sect member told NHK public television of living on survival rations of bread, noodles and rice cakes, and sleeping in cramped conditions.

"There wasn't even enough room to sleep like a human being," he said.

He also said that errant followers were force-fed unidentified drugs to prevent them from leaving.

Police have not linked their raids with the subway attack, but the sight of officers in chemical-warfare gear left little doubt that they were looking for clues in the nerve-gas case.

The official reason for the raids was to search for evidence related to the alleged Feb. 28 abduction of Kiyoshi Kariya, 68, a charge the sect denies.

Mr. Kariya was abducted as his sister was trying to break with the sect Asahara founded in 1987.



British Queen Elizabeth II with South African party at the presidential Guest House in Vice-President Thabo Mbeki at a garden Pretoria during her South African tour (AFP)

U.K. queen hopes for peace in S. Africa

DURBAN, South Africa (R) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth, on the final day of a six-day state visit, said Saturday she had been saddened by the violence that had racked South Africa and hoped peace would prevail.

At a lunch hosted by KwaZulu-Natal provincial Premier Frank Mdlalose, the queen said she had been struck "by the distinctive pride and self-confidence of the communities here."

An additional element was struggling hard to achieve its rightful place in post-apartheid South Africa: Reconciliation.

"We in Britain have been deeply saddened by the violence which has so beset you. Equally, we have been encouraged by the evident determination of ordinary men and women to overcome

their problems and find ways of working together.

"I trust that peace will prevail in the common interest," she said.

The queen spent the final two days of her visit in KwaZulu-Natal, where conflict between supporters of President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party of Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi has killed about 1,500 people since last year's first all-race elections.

The queen was also seeing Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, who is locked in a power struggle with his uncle Buthelezi for the hearts and minds of the country's 8.5 million Zulus. She met Mr. Buthelezi last Monday.

She told the lunch Britain wanted to support South Africa in bringing basic services to all and in creating "a climate from which violence and fear are absent."

The queen started the tour with her husband Prince Philip last Monday in Cape Town, then continued to Port Elizabeth and the Pretoria-Johannesburg area before flying to Durban. She was leaving for Britain Saturday night.

In her lunch speech, she referred to the visit, her first since she accompanied her parents King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and sister Princess Margaret to South Africa in 1947, as "one of the outstanding experiences of my life."

British and South African officials said the current tour set the seal on South Africa's post-apartheid relations with Britain and the Commonwealth, the 51-nation grouping of former British imperial possessions she heads.

6 killed in India election violence

PATNA, India (AP) — Rival political parties set off crude bombs and police shot hoodlums trying to grab ballot papers during a state legislative election in northern India. Six people were killed and at least 34 others injured, an election official said.

Rival groups set off about 24 crude bombs to scare away voters in 13 districts where elections were held, said T.P. Maheshwari, Bihar state's top election official. Twenty-four persons were injured in the explosions.

A lawbreaker set fire to a polling station and his supporters snatched the ballot papers and attacked the officials, he said.

Electoral fraud was so rampant in the past that the independent Election Commission split the hallowing over five days and ordered one of the tightest security arrangements.

standards, where dozens of people have been shot dead or hacked to death in earlier elections.

Fujimori holds wide lead in Peruvian polls

LIMA (R) — President Alberto Fujimori, who is running for a second term, continues to hold a wide lead over his nearest rival ahead of the April 9 elections, polls published Friday said.

But the surveys indicated that the margin of Mr. Fujimori's lead over former United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has narrowed.

A survey by Peru's leading polling firm Apoyo indicated that Mr. Fujimori would capture 47 per cent of the vote compared to 22 per cent for Mr. Perez de Cuellar. The poll of 3,038 voters, carried out on March 19-23 had a two per cent margin of error.

Mr. Fujimori's support was down from an earlier poll done by the same firm on March 13 that gave him 50 per cent of voter support compared to only 17 per cent for Mr. Perez de Cuellar.

Under Peruvian law, Friday was the last day pre-election polls could be published in Peru.

Another poll by Imasen said 45.5 per cent of voters surveyed on March 17-21 backed Mr. Fujimori, while 19.8 per cent favoured Mr. Perez de Cuellar.

The polling firm found that support for Mr. Fujimori had slipped from 47.1 per cent in mid-February, when Peru was fighting a border conflict with Ecuador.

The president and a 120-seat Congress will be chosen in the election. If the top presidential candidate fails to win 50 per cent of the vote, a second round will be held in June.

U.S. house passes welfare overhaul

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The House of Representatives approved a Republican welfare overhaul which would end decades of social programmes in the United States and make individual states responsible for the poor.

The 234-199 vote for the "Personal Responsibility Act" followed four days of often raucous debate over welfare mothers, abortion and child care and it drew immediate fire from the White House and social welfare activists.

Republican sponsors promised the bill would end a "vicious cycle of dependence" on welfare and save \$66 billion.

"For generations now we have seen this destructive welfare system stay in place and keep people where they are, a system that is destructive of future self-esteem, destructive of family, destructive of the basic moral fiber that has held this nation together," said Florida Representative Clay Shaw.

"Now is the time to sweep this away."

But Democrats — all but nine of them voting against the bill — have portrayed it as a fine levied against children and the poor to finance a tax break for the rich.

"Who pays for this gift from Uncle Sam to the privileged few in this country?" asked Tennessee Representative Harold Ford, who named "poor families with children, food stamp recipients (and) kids who lose school lunches" as the victims.

The bill has targeted the federal school lunch programme as one of the some 45 decades-old social assistance plans to be scrapped.

President Bill Clinton said in a statement it was "a shame the House of Representatives could not produce a real welfare reform plan that would promote work and responsibility and attract broad bipartisan support."

But others were less restrained. "This bill breaks America's commitment to its children to protect them from hunger and homelessness," said David Kass with the Children's Defence Fund.

"This would write a blank check to the states with no accountability, just dumping the problem on the governors and saying: 'Here you deal with it,'" he said.

Mr. Kass noted that ultimately the problem could land right back in the laps of those at the federal level should the states fail to cope with the mammoth problem of dealing with America's social ills.

The Senate will now debate its own welfare bill which must then be reconciled with the House bill before heading to the White House for final approval.

Mr. Clinton, whose party was defeated in the November midterms, has been reduced to the role of spectator in the legislative drive, but the White House has not lost an opportunity to portray the Republicans as extremists bent on helping those who need it least.

"This is a redistribution of income in the wrong direction," said White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta.

But Mr. Clinton, still stinging from the rebuke of the Republicans as extremists bent on helping those who need it least.

"I am determined to work with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to produce the kind of welfare reform Americans — regardless of party affiliation — want and expect," he said in his statement.

Meanwhile, the Senate ratified a treaty Friday aimed at restricting the use of land mines and lessening their potential to harm civilian populations.

The conventional weapons treaty passed by voice vote with no debate requires land mines to be mapped in detail and contain internal clocks which deactivate the devices after six months.

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Philippines holds 4 Chinese boats in Spratlys

MANILA (R) — The Philippine Navy Saturday boarded and detained four Chinese fishing boats in the latest incident between nations claiming the potentially oil-rich Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, the government said.

A Philippine Navy patrol boat and a transport ship captured the Chinese vessels near Alicia Reef in the part of the Spratlys claimed by Manila, a presidential palace statement said.

There was no immediate reaction from the Chinese embassy in Manila about the incident.

The Spratlys, a cluster of islands, reefs and atolls, are claimed wholly or in part by China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei. Most seerity analysts in South East Asia regard them as the next potential flashpoint in the region.

Brigadier general Carlos Tanega, commander of the Philippine military's Western Command (Westcom), said all four vessels would be taken to Ulugan Bay on Palawan Island, about 550 kilometres southwest of Manila.

Gen. Tanega said one of the ships boarded was found to possess cyanide. Fishermen in the area said the cyanide is normally injected into coral reefs to stun bump-head wrasse and other fish so they can be scooped up and stored live in seawater in the holds of the ship for transport to China.

Speaking in Beijing earlier Saturday before the news of the high seas boarding, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said the Philippine Navy's destruction of Chinese-set survey markers on reefs in the Spratlys Thursday would not help in settling the dispute over ownership of the archipelago.

"This action will do no good in the settlement of the issue, nor will it do any harm to China's sovereignty over the Nansha (Spratly) Islands," the spokesman told reporters.

Philippine and Chinese Foreign Ministry officials failed to reach agreement in talks in Beijing this week to try to defuse tension after Manila charged China with widening its occupation of the disputed archipelago. They were planning more meetings, but it was not immediately clear whether the detention of the four Chinese vessels Saturday would affect the situation.

Last month, Manila accused Beijing of building what it said looked like a naval support installation over Mischief Reef.

People flee as bodies litter Burundi capital

BUJUMBURA (R) — Grief-stricken Burundis wailed over dozens of bullet-riddled corpses littering the streets of a Bujumbura suburb Saturday after a night of savagery between Hutu and Tutsi gangs, witnesses said.

Hundreds of families were bundling up a few belongings and fleeing the city in cars and buses, abandoning the city to army patrols and terrifying gangs of Tutsi and Hutu youths, they said.

In the suburb of Buyenzi, journalists saw 40 or 50 bodies strewn about the roads as shooting sputtered on in the district of Kanzenza.

"Most were young men but there were women, whole families too... there were people crying. It was very emotional," said one Western

photographer, describing how he also saw people horrifically wounded.

State radio said Friday night that the headquarters of the ruling Hutu-led Front for Democracy in Burundi Party (Frodebu) had been set fire during clashes in the day.

Meanwhile, Burundi officials, condemned President Sylvestre Ntibunganya for failing to make any public statements about the violence.

"His silence has a very great political importance," said one senior figure in the administration who was too scared to be identified. "We don't know who is running the country."

The new prime minister Antoine Nduwayo, however, held talks with foreign diplomats Saturday.

Russia gets revenge in VE-Day parade

MOSCOW (AFP) — By getting U.S. President Bill Clinton to agree to attend ceremonies here marking the 50th anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany, the Russians have taken sweet revenge for their exclusion from last year's commemoration of the Normandy landings.

Preparations have been in hand for months already for what will be the year's biggest celebration on the official calendar.

Hundreds of tanks and several infantry battalions — including at least one back from the war in Chechnya — are massing on the outskirts of Moscow to train for the May 9 parade at Poklonnaya Gora, the big park on the west of the capital which houses an impressive memorial to the Great Patriotic War, as World War II is termed here.

They will not however form part of what the authorities consider to be the chief event of the day, the marchpast of more than 5,000 war veterans at 10 a.m. on Red Square.

Mr. Clinton and his host President Boris Yeltsin are due to be joined there by Prime Minister John Major of Britain and President Francois Mitterrand of France. Mr. Yeltsin is still waiting to learn if German Chancellor Helmut Kohl will also come.

Red Square, that vast paved expanse at the foot of the Kremlin where Lenin's mausoleum is still in place, has not had a military parade since the May 1950 ceremonies presided over by Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet president.

The defence minister of the day landed the "superiority of socialist military organisation and Soviet military skill" as decisive factors in Russia's defeat of the German invaders.

In all of Soviet history, no American president ever attended any of the traditionally impressive military parades with Communist leaders.

Sergei Stankevich of parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee said Mr. Clinton's first-time presence would be "partial but important compensation for the insult to Russian dignity" last year on June 6 in Normandy and on Sept. 8 in Berlin.

The first marked the landing of allied forces in France, the second their departure from Germany after a half-century of postwar "occupation." The Russians were not invited.

Meanwhile, Germany's main opposition parties accused the Bonn government Friday of elusiveness in arranging its commemoration of the end of World War II in Europe and of slighting Warsaw by not inviting a Polish leader.

The Social Democrats (SPD) said Chancellor Kohl was wrong to invite only the leaders of the United States, Britain, France and Russia to the May 8 ceremonies in Berlin marking the 50th anniversary of the war's end.

Poland, as the first country to be invaded by Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht in 1939, had also sought to be invited to Germany's official anniversary event.

"If we in Germany celebrate the end of the war and the beginning of peace, then we should invite our friends and partners, especially those who were invaded by Germany in the past," SPD Chairman Rudolf Scharping told ARD television.

"I have the impression that Kohl has... stomped around like a bull in a China shop. It is an affront, especially to Poland, and I think it must be corrected as quickly as possible."

Boiling tension in Macedonia worries U.S.

TETOVO, Macedonia (AP) — The danger of a war that could eclipse even Bosnia's carnage lurks in the tense streets of this drab Macedonian town.

Ethnic Albanians make up 80 per cent of Tetovo's 100,000 people. They always lived uneasily with the Macedonians. Since an ethnic Albanian was killed in a February clash with police over a banned Albanian-language university, the two groups barely speak.

The only thing they agree on is that if war explodes here or elsewhere in Macedonia, bloodshed could spread within the southern Balkans.

"Tensions are high, explosive," said Arben Xhaferi, a leader of radical ethnic Albanians who are seeking autonomy within Macedonia. "We want a peaceful solution, but all other options are open."

The United States, already worried enough about Macedonia to send 500 soldiers as U.N. peacekeepers in 1993, is now considering dispatching about 3,000 more soldiers as part of a NATO division. It would be the first NATO presence in former Yugoslavia.

Macedonia, says U.N. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, "is exactly the kind of problem that could erupt and the world, having paid no attention, suddenly says: 'how did this happen?'"

The GIS and some 600 Scandinavian peacekeepers are deployed way north of Tetovo, on the border with Serbia, and seem unlikely to check mounting ethnic friction.

Macedonia, a country of about two million people, was the only state that seceded peacefully from former Yugoslavia in 1991. Officially, Muslim ethnic Albanians are 22 per cent of the mostly Christian Orthodox Slav population. The Albanians, who boycotted a recent census, claim they represent more than a third.

Macedonia is a tinderbox and potential flashpoint because of its poverty, mixed population and hostile neighbours.

Greece refuses to recognise Macedonia, claiming it has designs on Greece's northern province of the same name. So does Serbia, saying a few thousand minority Serbs in Macedonia are oppressed. Bulgaria recognised Macedonia, but says Macedonians are not a nation and are actually Bulgarians.

Relations with Albania have frayed over the Tetovo University.

Mr. Xhaferi and other ethnic Albanians in Tetovo, their stronghold some 30 kilometres (18 miles) west of Macedonia's capital Skopje,

say that the Feb. 17 death of an Albanian protester at the university has hurried the "impossible" dream of a peaceful multiethnic state in the heart of the Balkans.

Macedonian authorities bulldozed the house serving as the Albanian-language university, claiming the state's constitution does not envisage high-level education in a minority language.

"The Macedonian government has failed its test in democracy," said Menduk Tachi, an Tetovo Albanian official. "It responded to our legitimate requests with repression. This is just like Serbia."

Mr. Tachi alluded to neighbouring Kosovo, where some 1.8 million ethnic Albanians, demanding independence, have organised passive resistance against Serbian authorities who govern with massive police and military force.

Now, as in Kosovo, Tetovo's ethnic groups stroll separate streets in the evening, frequent different restaurants and barely socialise. In Skopje, the situation is similar. Several young radical Albanians from Kosovo have fled to western Macedonia.

Macedonian officials play down the ethnic tensions, and say they won't lift the university ban. The impasse seems total as ethnic Albanians persist with classes elsewhere.

"Political radicalisation is possible in any society," said Ismail Djuner, Macedonia's government spokesman. "But we do not think the university question... can be a starting point of radicalisation."

Other Macedonians disagree.

"The fuse has been lit, and a possible explosion could shake the whole of the Balkans," said university lecturer Donce Mitkovski. "The Albanian question, if not solved soon, could ignite Southern Europe."

In case of bigger inter-ethnic clashes in Macedonia, Kosovo Albanians, Albania, Serbia, Greece and possibly Turkey would join the fight," Mr. Mitkovski said, adding that "a weak U.N. presence wouldn't change things."

U.N. officials privately admit their presence along the border with Serbia can hardly affect places like Tetovo.

"This water will be red with blood if they attack us again," said elderly Albanian Ibrahim Fehmi, pointing at a small river by the bulldozed would-be university.

"We're stronger and armed," said Mr. Fehmi, wearing the Albanians' traditional domed white cap. "Our brothers from Kosovo and Albania will be here to defend us."

Bolshoi director reappointed with new title

MOSCOW (AFP) — Vladimir Kokonin, the controversial general director of the Bolshoi Theatre who was fired a week ago, was reappointed Friday with the new title of executive director, ITAR-TASS reported.

Mr. Kokonin, whose reformist ideas have met opposition from Bolshoi veterans, has been at the heart of turbulence sweeping the theatre for the last year. The announcement early this month that he was being kept on at the Bolshoi and that Vladimir Vasilyev, a star dancer, would become artistic director, sparked the departure March 9 of chief choreographer Yuri Grigorovich. That was followed a few days later by the resignation of Mr. Grigorovich's wife, the dancer Natalya Besmertnova, and of chief designer Valery Levental, both of whom symbolise the Bolshoi's glory years in the 1960s. Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed Mr. Kokonin's reappointment Friday as Mr. Vasilyev took up his new job. Kokonin, 57, a musician who played in the Bolshoi orchestra for two years, was named director general of the theatre in 1988. That post has now been eliminated in reforms aimed at modernising the musty Bolshoi. Vasilyev told journalists he was looking forward to working with "a strong administrator" like Kokonin. The chaos at the Bolshoi has disrupted several performances. One show was cancelled and another delayed due to a strike by dancers opposed to Kokonin.

Patrick Swayze blazes in desert race

DOHA (R) — U.S. movie star Patrick Swayze, better known for his parts in the hit films Ghost and Dirty Dancing, took on a new role as a desert horseman in a marathon race in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar. Swayze, covered in sweat and wearing a cowboy hat, was not among the top three to finish the 42 kilometre Qatar Desert Horse Marathon, in which 39 mostly European and Middle Eastern riders took part in searing heat. But the well-known actor, riding his Arabian Mount Waseel bareback, trotted across the finish line four hours after the start of the race to wife Lisa and a crowd of well-wishers. "I'm absolutely amazed and proud and blown away that I got to ride an Arabian horse in the desert. I have achieved my dream," said the actor, who owns an Arabian horse ranch in California and was in Qatar to attend a horse show.

Greek crowned Miss Tourism International 1995

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Mariam Patel of Greece was crowned Miss Tourism International 1995 from a field of 23 contestants, the national news agency Bernama reported Saturday. Patel, 18, also won the award for best national costume in the competition Friday night on the resort island of Langkawi, 450 kilometres (280 miles) northwest of Kuala Lumpur. Patel, received \$5,000 in gift vouchers and a trophy. Malaysian Livinia Tan was first runner up. American Kim Bayers was second runner-up and also won the Miss Waveline Body Beautiful Award. Filipino Sherilyn Reyes was third runner-up, and Heidi Cerdas Esquivel of Costa Rica, fourth. Awards for Miss Friendship and Miss Personality went to Alessia Rivolta of Italy and Rebecca Read of Scotland, respectively. It was the second time Malaysia had hosted the contest.

Woman abducted moments after getting married

COLOMBO (AP) — In what could end up being one of the world's shortest marriages, a woman who had just said "I do" at her wedding was kidnapped by a former boyfriend. Working with six accomplices, the man burst into the ceremony in a crowded hall, grabbed the 18-year-old newlywed, pushed her into his van and drove away Thursday, police said. Even

Bosnian army captures Serb radio towers, U.N. reports

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Bosnian government forces appear to have captured two key Serb communications towers in a week of heavy fighting in northern and central Bosnia, a senior United Nations source said Saturday.

"We think the Bosnian army took the two radio towers," the source, who asked not to be named, said in Sarajevo. "All the indications support that conclusion."

The Bosnian army is still pressing the attack.

Bosnian army troops launched separate offensives against Serb forces south and east of Tuzla and north of Travnik, in central Bosnia, Monday. The attacks violated a country-wide truce agreement that is not due to expire until May.

U.N. officials identified the two towers — one atop a mountain in Stolice, east of the government-held city of Tuzla, and the other perched on Mount Vlasice, directly north of Travnik — as vital links in the Bosnian Serb communications network.

U.N. relief officials said 1,200 people had fled the central Bosnian town of Imjani, north of Travnik, due to fighting in the area and takeo refuge in Skender Vakuf. Imjani and Skender Vakuf were retaken from the Serbs in the latest offensive.

"There are more than 1,200 of them and they keep coming," said Kris Janowski, spokesman for the Sarajevo office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

"We're told all telephone connections around Skender Vakuf have been cut off apparently after the Bosnian army took a relay station in that area."

U.N. officials warned again Saturday that the fighting around Tuzla and Travnik threatens to spill over into country-wide conflict.

"The current military situation in Bosnia is extremely dangerous and if the two sides do not refrain from further military actions the situation is likely to spin out of control," said Alexander Nanku, a U.N. spokesman in Sarajevo.

U.N. special envoy Yasushi Akashi expressed serious concern Saturday over renewed fighting between Bosnia's Muslims and Serbs and appealed to them to extend the current ceasefire expiring on April 30.

"We are deeply concerned by the increase of fighting in Bosnia... the parties should seriously consider the extension of the ceasefire agreement," Mr. Akashi told Reuters.

"If the situation gets really bad we may have to consider withdrawing from Bosnia, with assistance from NATO," he said.

NATO has been working on contingency plans for a U.N. pullout from the country that would engage the biggest NATO force since the Gulf War in 1991.

Bosnia's Muslim-led government army this week launched the latest offensive and Bosnian Serbs threatened Friday a punitive counter-offensive that could shatter the country-wide ceasefire.

Bosnian government forces ignored the threat and pressed on with the offensive.

"If a full-scale war starts again our work may be made difficult, if not impossible," Mr. Akashi said. "We are very mindful of the safety and security of our troops."

Bosnia Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, his forces under attack from advancing government forces, Saturday urged an end to three years of fighting and called for immediate peace talks.

Mr. Karadzic's message, carried by the Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA), came as fighting spread to its widest level since a truce took effect Jan. 1. As recently as Friday, Mr. Karadzic had called on his troops to mobilise.

Indicating he'd prefer talks with the Muslim-led Sarajevo government without foreign mediation, Mr. Karadzic issued a "last call" for "immediate direct talks on peace, with cessation of all offensives." The Bosnian Serbs have repeatedly rejected an international peace plan.

Mr. Karadzic called for a return of the battle lines of Dec. 23, when the warring sides agreed to a ceasefire negotiated by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. That was followed by a four-month truce signed on Dec. 31, which has collapsed in the meantime.

It was Mr. Karadzic's second plea for peace. The Bosnian leader invited Mr. Carter to come to Bosnia, and, when he signed the earlier ceasefire, Mr. Karadzic said this could serve as a basis for direct peace talks.

Isolated and left without support from his former patron, powerful Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Mr. Karadzic's move is aimed at avoiding further losses to government forces in northern and central Bosnia.

The Bosnian government army, in its biggest offensives of the year, continued successful attacks near Tuzla in northeast and near Travnik in central Bosnia. New battlefronts opened in other areas, several cities and towns were shelled, and Sarajevo experienced the most intense artillery and small-arms exchanges in recent months.

Prior to Mr. Karadzic's call for peace talks, U.N. officials warned of the danger of all-out war.

"No matter how localised the fighting might seem at first, with the passage of time it spreads like a wildfire through a dry forest," said U.N. spokesman Alexander Nanku.

"The current military situation is extremely dangerous, and if the sides do not refrain from further offensive actions, the situation is likely to spin out of control," he said.

Both the government and the Bosnian Serbs have blamed each other for the collapse of the ceasefire, which was due to run through April 30.

A day before announcing his peace plea, Mr. Karadzic declared that the truce was over and called for a broader mobilisation of soldiers.

The Bosnian government says it is prepared to wage all-out war unless Mr. Karadzic accepts an international plan that would reduce the Serbs' current 70 per cent of Bosnia territory to 49 per cent.

A ten-truck U.N. food convoy reached a warehouse in the Bihac enclave early Saturday. It was only the second one since Feb. 28 to arrive with food for more than 200,000 needy people in the enclave.



Bosnian Serb soldiers hold their positions on the front line on Mountain Majevica, overlooking the Muslim stronghold town of Tuzla where Bosnian army and Serb forces fought in hand-to-hand combat for control of a communications' nexus atop a strategic peak (AFP photo)

Balladur goes into high gear to boost image

PARIS (R) — French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, keen to shed his image of wealth and haughtiness ahead of next month's presidential election, went hitchhiking and treated supporters to circus acts, French fries and accordions Saturday.

Thousands of enthusiastic supporters, coming from across the country in chartered trains and buses, mobbed the prime minister amid shouts of "we'll win, Balladur president" as he attended a mass rally at Le Bourget, near Paris.

The rally, dubbed "all for Edouard," was the biggest so far in Balladur's flagging campaign.

Accordions played popular tunes and acrobats performed, dogdolls, rolled coasters, cassoulet stew, sauerkraut, fried potatoes and spicy sausages gave the rally the good-bumoured fair-ground atmosphere.

Mr. Balladur, whose image has suffered from the disclosure of high profits made in shares sales, earlier appeared delighted that he had to resort to hitch-hiking after his helicopter was forced down by fog on a remote sports pitch on the way to a campaign meeting in Provence.

Motorist Claire Lacaille, driving with her husband and two alsatian dogs, packed Mr. Balladur, Environment Minister Michel Barnier and two aides in the back of her Mercedes.

Mr. Balladur chatted amiably through the 10-minute drive and asked for Mr. Lacaille's business card. He told reporters it was not the first time he had been hitchhiking and added: "One must be able to take risks and we completed our schedule despite fog."

Mr. Balladur has been criticised as being too cautious and yielding easily to protests.

The runaway presidential favourite for months, he has now dropped well behind fellow-gaullist Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac and is fighting for second place in opinion polls with Socialist Lionel Jospin.

Aides hoped the mass rally could turn the tables after the latest string of surveys showed Mr. Chirac slipping slightly and Mr. Balladur marginally regaining ground.

Mr. Balladur has been weakened by labour unrest, corruption probes into illegal party financing and a flood of desertions to Mr. Chirac's camp.

As pollsters say many voters, still undecided, are judging candidates on their image rather than on their platforms, Mr. Balladur was also seeking to bring the campaign back on political ground.

Accusing his rivals of making demagogic promises, he challenged them Friday night to televised debates.

"The French people have a right to be informed. They have not been informed, enough so far," he told a rally.

Former French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, forgetting past disputes, Friday backed Mr. Chirac for next month's presidential election.

Mr. Chirac torpedoed Mr. Chaban-Delmas's bid for the presidency in 1974, giving his support to centrist Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who was elected and rewarded Mr. Chirac with the premiership.

Mr. Chaban-Delmas, the powerful mayor of Bordeaux, told Mr. Chirac in a speech welcoming him on a visit to the city that France's next president must be "a true Gaullist, faithful to the policies of General (Charles) De Gaulle."

"This man... is Jacques Chirac," Mr. Chaban-Delmas said.

Mr. Chaban-Delmas was late President Georges Pompidou's close ally.

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Strike by businessmen closes Karachi

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — A strike called to protest escalating violence shut down Pakistan's business capital Saturday, and business leaders who organised the stay-away accused the government of harassment.

Police and paramilitary troops patrolled the deserted streets Saturday, usually a normal working day in Pakistan. Offices, shops and the Karachi Port were all closed.

"The success of the strike has shown that the people are concerned about the Karachi situation," said S.M. Muneer, president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI).

The FPCCI, the country's leading business association, called the one-day strike because it said Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government was ignoring the growing violence and terrorism in Karachi. Ms. Bhutto's government denounced the strike.

"It's a politically motivated strike and if anything happens, the responsibility will be on the FPCCI," said Abdullah Shah, chief minister for Sindh province, which includes Karachi.

Mr. Muneer, meanwhile, said he couldn't go to his home because five police vans and some 50 policemen were surrounding his house.

"For the first time in the history of Pakistan, police and intelligence agents have been placed outside the houses of business leaders to harass them," Mr. Muneer said.

When Mr. Muneer tried to hold an afternoon press conference at the FPCCI offices, he was barred by police and government officials who also said Mr. Muneer and three vice presidents had been dismissed from their positions at the chamber, which is a private organisation.

"We don't recognise or accept this unethical and illegal action by the government," said Mr. Muneer, who spoke to journalists by phone after he was barred from addressing the news conference.

About 500 people have been killed in Karachi over the last three months in political, religious and ethnic violence. The turmoil has disrupted businesses, sent the stock market plunging, and scared away potential foreign investors that Ms. Bhutto is trying to lure to Pakistan.

U.S. first lady Hillary Clinton arrives in Pakistan Saturday night, and Ms. Bhutto is preparing to visit the United States next month.

Ms. Bhutto plans to make an appeal for U.S. investment, but Mr. Muneer said the prime minister was undermining her own efforts.

"If the government continues with confrontational policies... no foreign investment will come to Pakistan," Mr. Muneer said.

The FPCCI called for a nationwide strike, but the response was strongest in Karachi. Other cities appeared only partially effected.

Strike calls are common in Pakistan. Last month, Ms. Bhutto called a one-day, nationwide strike to show solidarity with Muslim separatists who oppose Indian rule in Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan territory claimed by both Pakistan and India.

Meanwhile, a grenade was thrown into the courtyard of a Sunni Muslim mosque in Pakistan's central Punjab province Saturday, a local official said.

The official said no-one was hurt, but the private PPI news agency reported that one worshipper had been wounded.

The blast at the Hamza Mosque in the town of Chakwal, about 100 kilometres south of Islamabad, went off soon after dawn prayers, shattering windows of the mosque and nearby buildings.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Scores of people, many of them Shi'ite Muslims, have been killed and wounded in Pakistan in gun, grenade and bomb attacks on mosque by rival sectarian groups in recent months.

Chakwal has been at the centre of a controversy in Pakistan over a seismic centre being built there with U.S. assistance to monitor nuclear explosions in the region.

President: Sri Lanka peace process on track

NEW DELHI (AFP) — The peace process in Sri Lanka is on track, but it is still too early to set a timetable for settling the island's protracted ethnic conflict, President Chandrika Kumaratunga said here Saturday.

The Sri Lankan leader, who arrived in New Delhi Friday for a four-day visit to India, said the peace process with the Tamil Tigers separatist group was "progressing positively."

Asked when she expected to see a lasting settlement to the conflict with the island's Tamil minority, she replied: "I can't tell the time in weeks or days."

Mrs. Kumaratunga was speaking to reporters after being welcomed at the presidential palace here.

The Sri Lankan leader, who is making her first trip to South Asian giant India since taking office in November, then left for talks with her Indian counterpart Shankar Dayal Sharma and Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

During the talks, Mrs. Kumaratunga invited India to invest in Sri Lanka's core sectors and urged for a new phase in economic ties between the two South Asian neighbours, officials said.

Mr. Kumaratunga briefed Rao on her efforts to resolve the Tamil conflict.

A 1987 bilateral pact between New Delhi and Colombo failed to bring about a settlement of the ethnic conflict which has left more than 30,000 people dead during the past 23 years.

The Sri Lankan government began peace talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which controls much of the island's north, last year. But the two sides are deadlocked after three rounds of negotiations.

LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran is wanted in India for his alleged role in the 1991 assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but Sri Lankan officials have denied reports that an Indian extradition request would be taken up during her visit.

Malaysia's Mahathir calls for big election win

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad launched his ruling coalition's unofficial election campaign Saturday with a call for a big win at the polls to ensure the country's continued development.

"We need a more than two-thirds majority to ensure progress and development," Mr. Mahathir told a convention of the National Front, a coalition of racially-based parties that has ruled Malaysia since independence from Britain in 1957.

An election is not due until October, but Mr. Mahathir is widely expected to call a snap poll before then.

Political analysts say Mr. Mahathir, who has led the government for the past 14 years, will be returned to power and the only question is how big his victory will be.

Mr. Mahathir said the coalition should rule for the next 25 years to enable it to fulfill its pledge of making Malaysia a developed country by 2020.

The National Front, formed in 1974, comprises 14 parties but is dominated by Mr. Mahathir's United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).

While Mr. Mahathir addressed 4,000 coalition members in the cavernous Putra World Trade Centre, 60 landowners arrived to protest against a controversial land acquisition law.

But police kept the protesters away from the delegates and escorted them from the trade centre.

Political analysts said opposition parties will make land acquisition a major issue in the election campaign following a series of controversial cases.

The law was amended four years ago to allow states to take over property on behalf of private individuals or firms if it is "beneficial to the economic development of Malaysia."

Previously, states could only take over private property for public projects such as roads, schools and hospitals.

"Mahathir's National Front will have to tread carefully in dealing with this issue as the opposition will play on it," said political analyst Hassan Rashid.

Mr. Mahathir blasted the opposition in his speech, broadcast live on national television, saying the people should not elect opposition candidates merely for the sake of democracy.

"Democracy is for forming a good government, not democracy for democracy's sake," he said.

Mr. Mahathir said his goal was to keep the coalition's two-thirds majority in parliament — the margin needed to amend the constitution.

Arms found in Belfast on 1st night without army



A member of the 1 Para is on patrol in Belfast's Falls Road for the last time, as the British army suspended all routine patrols throughout Belfast for the first time in more than 20 years (AFP photo)

BELFAST (R) — Northern Ireland police seized guns and bomb-making equipment on their first night for 25 years of patrolling Belfast without army backup.

They said Saturday the bomb equipment, two rifles, shotguns and about 200 rounds of ammunition were found in an area of North Belfast inhabited by Protestant loyalists, who want the province to stay British.

For the last 25 years, police have patrolled the capital with heavily-armed support from some of the 18,000 troops stationed in Northern Ireland.

Britain announced Friday it was ending army night patrols in a move seen as a concession to Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, which wants an end to British rule.

Sinn Fein wants to discuss the total withdrawal of the army and Protestant-dominated local police from Northern Ireland at the first planned ministerial talks between the two sides.

But the British government says this cannot be on the agenda and that it is only prepared to discuss disarming the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which fought British rule until a landmark ceasefire last September.

It wants to decommission IRA weapons, which include plastic explosive and ground-to-air missiles, as well as the smaller arsenal held by so-called loyalist guerrillas who killed 700 Catholics to dry up support for the Irish Republican group.

The cache found overnight was small but it was seen as a significant success on the night that the Royal Ulster Constabulary ventured onto Belfast's streets without the army.

Britain ended daytime patrols on Jan. 14 in response to the IRA ceasefire and a matching truce by loyalists the following month.

The move was seen as a concession to Sinn Fein, which seeks the "demilitarisation" of Northern Ireland and which has vocally complained about alleged harassment of Catholics in their West Belfast heartland.

Troops in armoured vehicles carrying assault rifles were a common sight across Northern Ireland until January but they have melted away under British efforts to underpin a fledgling peace process and return normality to the province.

Earlier this week, Britain withdrew 400 soldiers, saying the reduced security threat meant they were no longer needed.

Election deals blow for Australia's Keating

SYDNEY (R) — Australian Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating was dealt a blow in a local election Saturday that was the beginning of the end of his government.

Neither could Mr. Keating take comfort from a general election in Australia's most populous state, New South Wales, where Labour was fighting to defeat the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition which has ruled for the last seven years.

At the end of counting in New South Wales Saturday night, no party had clearly won and the state's 3.8 million voters may not know what colour their government will be for some days, or even weeks.

At the federal by-election in Canberra, the nation's capital, the Liberal-National Party candidate saw a 16.4 per cent swing in his favour, taking a seat held by Labour since 1980.

"It's the biggest swing against an incumbent government since 1949," a triumph opposition leader John Howard said.

"It's a revolt by mainstream Australia against the Keating government. Mainstream Australia sees the coalition as an alternative government," he told reporters.

The prime minister played down the result but acknowledged the vote sent him a message.

"This is a disappointing result that sends the government a message that has been received and will be acted on," he said.

He said the government needs to get the message across that the economy is doing better than the public perceives.

"Liberal doomsaying may have won a battle but it will not win the war," he told journalists.

The Liberal-National Party also recently won government in the Australian capital territory, which encompasses the national capital, a result Mr. Keating then dismissed as insignificant.

Mr. Keating, who was in no danger of losing Labour's healthy majority in the federal parliament, must call an election by May 1996 although political analysts expect him to call a poll before next March and possibly in late 1995.

In New South Wales, final television computer projections put the 99-seat lower house of parliament result at 48 for the ruling coalition, 49 for Labour and three independents.

Jordan Times

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What exactly is the intention?

THE PLIGHT of the Iraqi people, long ignored by the world community, is once more becoming the focus of attention. Arab governments are increasingly becoming vocal in their protestations against the continuation of the U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990. The 15 members of the U.N. Security Council, after a worldwide U.S. campaign of arm-twisting, agreed to extend the sanctions for another 60 days. U.S. officials have lately been showing satellite photos to Middle East leaders and Washington Congressmen of what they say is an Iraqi effort to rebuild its arms programme.

Meanwhile, Rolf Ekeus, the Swedish U.N. official entrusted to enforce the U.N. Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq's disarmament, is in Baghdad for talks with Iraqi officials ahead of his forthcoming report to the council on April 10. Mr. Ekeus has been quoted recently as saying that he did not recognise the U.S. charges of an Iraqi arms buildup.

Mr. Ekeus is a respected and trustworthy man. But he and his organisation do not determine when the sanctions will be lifted or how long they will endure.

The U.S., meanwhile, is floating an idea for easing the sanctions. Building on a previous U.N. resolution that allows Iraq the sale of a one-time sum of oil worth \$1.6 billion, the Americans — together with the British and Argentine governments — are proposing raising the amount to \$4 billion annually.

The measure is apparently meant for two purposes, one to please the Security Council members who are in favour of easing the sanctions, and, two, to put pressure on Iraq and to lure it into accepting the partial lifting. But Iraq, suspicious of U.S. intentions, is most certainly going to reject the proposal. That will in turn weaken the central government and threaten the unity of the country. Whether that will lead to the weakening of the Iraqi regime itself as the U.S. might hope is a big question. Judging from the experience of the past five years this looks highly improbable.

Meanwhile the Iraqi people will be the sole losers in this regional and global conflict that has already claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children and led to a new crisis in the north of the country where 30,000 Turkish troops are now engaged in fighting with Kurdish rebels.

The U.S., its allies and the United Nations must realise that the ostracisation of Iraq has created a vacuum in the northern Gulf and a power imbalance in the whole region that if maintained could lead to dire consequences. In the Arab World in particular more and more politicians are at loss trying to explain to their constituencies the logic behind maintaining the sanctions that are exacting a heavy toll on their brethren in Iraq. Calls for an end to the embargo are coming even from members of the 30-country alliance that drove the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Apart from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia every other Arab country is on record for ending the suffering of the Iraqi people.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily on Saturday said in its editorial that Turkey's invasion of northern Iraq to militarily solve an internal Turkish problem will not succeed. The newspaper said the real solution to the problem of Turkish Kurds lies in Ankara. The paper said that Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller has said that there is a linkage between the state of chaos and lawlessness in northern Iraq and the present Turkish invasion. The paper quoted the Turkish premier as saying that a solution to the situation in Iraq should be found so as the invasion would not be repeated. The newspaper said the premier was right in her diagnosis of the situation but was wrong in failing to mention that Turkey was a main contributor to this situation by hosting the Western alliance forces that established a safe zone in the area to protect the Iraqi Kurds. The paper asked if Turkey would have agreed to establish such an area in southeast Turkey. It added that countries neighbouring Iraq should give credibility to their affirmation of respect of Iraq's sovereignty and the integrity of its land through terminating all conditions preventing the return of northern Iraq to Baghdad's rule.

AL DUSTOUR daily said Israel still focuses on normalising relations with Arab countries to build what it describes as a warm peace, ignoring other basis that would form the solid ground for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. The paper said Israel's ambassador-designate to Jordan Shimon Shamir expressed in statements to Haaretz newspaper his worry about the opposition by the educated elite and popular organisations in Arab countries to normalising ties with Israel, as he stressed Israel's keenness to enhance economic cooperation with Arab countries. The paper said peace can be based only on confidence-building factors, restoring the full Arab rights, ending reasons for tension and anxiety and ending occupation. It said the main principle for the peace process was the land-for-peace formula as expressed clearly in the American initiative which launched the process in 1991 and as stated in U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Therefore Israeli manoeuvres aiming to avoid applying this principle on other Arab tracks would threaten the peace process as a whole and make talk about normalisation and economic cooperation meaningless, it added.



Kazakh leader revealing authoritarian colours

By Douglas Busvine
 Reuter

ALMA-ATA — Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's dissolution of parliament and the raft of decrees that followed have shown the president has an authoritarian streak, opponents and diplomats say.

Mr. Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's former communist party chief, dissolved the former Soviet Republic's parliament earlier this month after the constitutional court declared last year's general elections illegal because of vote-rigging and gerrymandering.

He said the move was necessary to restore law and order and he has pledged to rule by decree until new elections are held.

Opponents say some of Mr. Nazarbayev's decrees, which include restrictions on advertising and compulsory psychiatric treatment for alcoholics and the insane, indicate he is trying to

take tighter grip on the giant republic of 17 million people.

Another decree says bunger strikers must seek advance permission for their fast.

"He's playing with more authoritarian rule," said a Western diplomat. "He might be tempted to try being an enlightened dictator."

"We are going back to the Soviet era," said another diplomat. "What really made me jump is the introduction of psychiatric treatment for people who are deranged, but who defines it?" he asked.

Newspaper editors say the limits on advertising could bankrupt Kazakhstan's young independent press.

"We supported the president because we support the law," said Vadim Boretko, news editor of the mass-circulation Karavan newspaper. But limits on advertising were "a straight

punch." Editors say they came under official pressure not to report opposition deputies' protests over their dismissal.

Mr. Nazarbayev says the dissolution of parliament was a logical result of the constitutional court ruling and has refused to talk to deputies challenging the move.

"The real intention is to create order without restricting democracy and democratic freedoms," presidential spokesman Dulat Kuanyshyev told Reuters.

"The problem is to restrict crime and the state should attack... We have examined public opinion on this and the mood is for more drastic measures."

Diplomats say they expect Mr. Nazarbayev to use his new powers to push market reforms — although he may call referendums on issues like electoral reforms and land privatisation. He is also likely to intro-

duce a bicameral legislature replacing the old parliament following a similar move last year by Askar Akayev, leader of neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, diplomats said.

Opposition deputies fear Mr. Nazarbayev would pack the upper house of a two-chamber parliament with his own supporters, as he did with a "presidential list" of over 40 deputies in the disbanded 177-seat parliament.

"I think the new parliament will be a servile one," said former deputy Serik Abdrakhmanov. "In the upper house some deputies will be nominated by the president... By doing this he will show his aspirations for a presidential republic."

Mr. Nazarbayev himself has made clear what he has in mind: "Today it is clear to everybody that a fully presidential republic is the only way to resolve this task," he said recently.

The whiff of terror

By Martin Woollacott

JUST AS we are on the point of achieving a general ban on chemical weapons in warfare, they could reappear as an instrument of social violence in the hands of deranged groups or individuals. This is the possibility raised by the Tokyo nerve gas attack. If it is news from the future, it is very bad news indeed.

The change that Tokyo seems to illustrate is not necessarily to do with the familiar nightmare of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction. It is that we could be at the beginning of a shift away from the relatively rational world of terrorists, separatists, rebels, and coup makers towards an irrational world of armed cults or crazed individuals who want to stage an apocalyptic protest.

Such groups or individuals may have aims so fantastical that they are not remotely realisable, not negotiable, and not even understandable. They may recognise fewer and fewer of the limits on armed action that it has to be conceded, have been recognised in the past by most violent movements.

There is nothing surprising in extremists taking advantage of the latest developments in military technology. Extremist techniques have marched in lock-step with the development of small arms and high explosives. It is also true that the difference between Sarin and Semtex is one of convention. It is only convention which makes a weapon which chokes or paralyses seem more horrible than one which burns or blasts its victims to death.

Yet the existence of a generally, even if not universally, observed ban on a category of weapons is a thing worthwhile in itself. Violence is, among many other things, usually a form of bargaining. Repressive though many of their operations have been, the activities of traditional extremist groups have been rationally

conditioned by their aims. Quite apart from any considerations of morality, movements like this know that certain kinds of violence would destroy what they are fighting for.

A national extremist movement fighting to create a separate state in Europe, for instance, like ETA, could have no use for weapons of mass destruction in Madrid. That would be to provoke revenge on a similar scale. And how could a state which had perpetrated such a crime take its place among other European states? It might end all prospect of existence. Let alone independence. Similarly, the often raised prospect — before the ceasefire — of an IRA attack on the Chunnel is inherently implausible. It would be too great a blow to Britain, to France, and to Europe to serve any conceivable purpose. We may also hazard that it would be beyond what even violent Republicans would regard as morally justifiable.

According to some students of the matter there could soon come a time when we will look back to the era of the IRA as a time of relative simplicity and safety. Marvin J. Cetron, the coordinator of a recent report on terrorism for the U.S. Department of Defence, argued in an interview with the International Herald Tribune that we will soon see the emergence of what he calls "super-terrorists" who will possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and will "show a new willingness to use them."

They will be motivated, he says, by ethnic and religious hatreds and their goal will be "not political control but the utter destruction of their chosen enemies." He also claimed that "an improvised nuclear, biological, or chemical attack on the United States is increasingly probable — perhaps within the next five years." Mr. Cetron seems to hint at the use of such weapons by Islamic fundamentalists especially.

In fact Islamist groups may be more subject to the influence of morality and to rational calculations about their objects than many in the West are ready at this moment to accept. The greater danger may arise from the growth in various societies of cultish groups that are in a barish and confrontational opposition to society. They could end up using terrible weapons because they feel threatened, as the Branch Davidians did at Waco, if such weapons are available or can be relatively easily put together with limited resources. There is a parallel growth of a kind of institutionalisation of the death-dealing individual protester. Such men would usually have access only to automatic weapons, but in a few freak cases, of which Japan may be one, they might have access to much, much worse. Then the man who wreaks bloody havoc at a McDonald's could wreak it across a whole city.

Because such groups or individuals have no sane objective and because they can emerge overnight, they could be far more dangerous than established movements which have many contacts with their opponents and some common interests. We are past the point where even very swift

progress towards the banning or limiting at very low, controlled levels of nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological weapons by states, desirable although it is, will necessarily do off scenarios of this kind. A few at least of the technologies are now so much in the public realm that even a complete stoppage of their use by the military does not end the possibility of backyard versions being used. Such versions would be nearly useless to states, which need large reliable inventories of weapons and effective means of delivery. They would also be useless to "rational" extremist movements.

But they could cause devastation in the hands of millennial cults, splinter groups from mainstream terrorist organisations or individuals. There is evidence in many societies a militarisation of protest which could ultimately tend in the same direction. The violent fringe of the anti-abortion movement in the U.S. is an obvious example. It is the combination of a violent rational ends and not in any bargaining relationship with a state or government but holding hitherto unavailable means of destruction that is so threatening.

The Chemical Weapons Convention signed two years ago in Paris committed representatives of 130 states to the complete banning of chemical weapons. Its coming into force and the setting up of an Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been delayed by the dilatoriness of governments in ratifying it. Perhaps Tokyo will clarify their minds. That would be a benefit. But Tokyo shows that the disarmament of states will not necessarily involve the disarmament of groups or individuals if we do not confront the psychological and social forces making for a militarisation of protest both by marginal groups and disturbed individuals.

The Guardian

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Faneh

Jordan's economic growth is a result of foreign trade

DURING 1994, exports including reexports jumped by 15.9 per cent, while foreign imports decreased by 3.7 per cent, thus the trade deficit narrowed by 14 per cent. Each one of these three figures sets a record and represents a new direction which is worth dwelling on.

The high growth of exports is a source of satisfaction because it means higher industrial output and the penetration of new markets, and consequently, the generation of new jobs. In fact, exports of products is a substitute for exporting labour or importing unemployment.

Since Jordanian exports formed some 26 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1993, the growth of exports at this rate means an increase in GDP by 4.13 per cent. In this regard, exports in 1994 were responsible for almost three quarters of the economic growth witnessed by Jordan during the past year, which is tentatively estimated at 5.7 per cent.

Imports, on the other hand, were expected to grow every year. Even the economic adjustment programme, agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), forecast an increase but expected that the increase will be moderate. However, imports unexpectedly decreased for the first time in recent years.

Since imports are equal to 6.15 per cent of the GDP, the reduction of imports, a negative component of the GDP, means an increase in GDP by around 2.27 per cent.

Services, which were expected to show a further improvement, declined by some \$30 million according to the 1994 tentative balance of payments. This decline is equal to 0.54 per cent of the GDP. Thus, services contributed negatively to the economic growth by this percentage.

Bringing together all the above figures and percentages enables us to conclude that the foreign trade sector, in commodities and services in 1994, caused a net growth in the GDP of 5.86 per cent. This is equal to, or slightly higher, than the overall growth of the GDP in 1994, that means that the foreign sector, i.e., our dealing with the international markets, was responsible for all the economic growth achieved in 1994. All other domestic factors were either neutral or offset each other.

This is of course a purely mathematical analysis. However, there is an important difference between an increase in exports and a decrease in imports. The rise in exports means positive and sustainable economic growth while a decline in imports may be a healthy sign only if it was caused by an increase in domestic production to reduce the need for imports and replace imports. However, we are afraid that the decline in imports was caused by an economic slow down or recession, which became evident in the last quarter of the year and pushed many to postpone consumption or investment plans, which is not a sustainable source of growth.

The volume of private consumption is normally an indication of the standard of living. We definitely would like to reduce consumption as a percentage of a growing GDP, but we also wish to see private consumption increase in absolute figures, to maintain or improve the standard of living.

The national accounts for 1994 are not finalised and issued yet to enable us to understand how it was possible to increase exports and decrease imports at the same time.

Americans love guns

By Slobodan Lekic

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The timing seemed curious. Even before formally announcing his presumed candidacy for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole pledged to revoke a federal gun-control law.

But Mr. Dole's promise underscores two enduring facets of American society: the enduring commitment of citizens to their firearms and the power of their lobbying organisation, the National Rifle Association (NRA).

The right to bear arms evokes far stronger passions in America than almost anywhere else in the world.

While gun ownership is banned in some countries, many allow their citizens to own weapons after obtaining permission from the police. The procedure, intended to screen out criminals and the mentally unstable, is considered routine and rarely sparks political debate.

In the United States, local gun laws vary, but generally reflect a burning conviction dating back to the founding of the republic that individual liberties are somehow inextricably tied to weapons ownership.

The second amendment to the U.S. Constitution declares "the right of the people to keep and bear arms," and American courts generally have been unwilling to limit severely that right.

In a country of 260 million people, there are at least 150 million guns in circulation. Guns are used in one million crimes and 15,000 homicides each year. And more Americans die each year in shootings than were killed in combat at the height of the Vietnam war.

Still it took until 1993, after nearly a decade of debate, for Congress to pass a measure requiring a five-day waiting period before purchasing a gun to allow for background checks.

The law Mr. Dole took

aim at was passed last year and bans 19 specific types of assault-style firearms and scores of similar semiautomatic weapons.

Many Americans see even these minimal controls as infringing on their civil liberties. Resistance is strongest in western states such as Montana, Arizona and Texas, where the image of wild west individualism thrives.

"If Americans were deprived of firearms or if they were somehow made inaccessible, you would be downgrading the whole concept of American citizenship," said William Ruger, founder of Sturm, Ruger and Co., one of the country's largest firearms makers.

The National Rifle Association stands a good chance of getting the controls repealed.

Its 3.5 million members have spent \$4 million in the last five years to support friendly lawmakers and to crusade against restrictions. In contrast, gun-control groups contributed only \$236,000 to their supporters on Capitol Hill over the same period.

"Mr. Dole is afraid that if he does not obey the NRA, its political contributions and support will go to someone else in the 1996 presidential primaries," commented a New York Times editorial.

The group's tactics paid off in last November's midterm elections, when many Democrats who voted for the controls were unseated by Republicans favouring their repeal.

Tanya Metaksa, the group's aggressive chief lobbyist, makes no secret of her plans to unleash gun owners' anger on Washington.

"That's M-E-T, A-K as in AK-47, S-A as in semi-automatic," she says in introducing herself.

"I don't know of any other group that plays it that tough," said Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

"If you vote for them 99 times and once against them, it's very bad."

India's last bastion of resistance to free market reforms fades

By Ranjan Roy
The Associated Press

CALCUTTA — The revolution wrought in India's only Marxist-ruled state doesn't look like the one promised when the Communist Party of India won power 18 years ago.

The leaders of West Bengal have locked up their red banners and are following the lead of the rest of India in welcoming private investors. No longer is it bad to be rich.

Perestroika in India's most densely populated state — and one of its poorest — is proof that even the most stubborn critics of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao now see his economic reforms as the only route to progress.

But West Bengal remains a showcase of Third World underdevelopment. Here, all the difficulties of Mr. Rao's three-year-old effort to wrench India into the global industrial mainstream are compressed into one place.

Calcutta is a model of unattractiveness for international business — a synonym for filth and urban decay. It is an overcrowded metropolis of 13 million people where streets are overrun by the homeless, where traffic crawls over potholed roads, and where telephones remain dead for weeks.

More than any other Indian city, Calcutta resisted Mr. Rao's market-friendly reforms. Saying they were upholding the rights of the working man, the communists even refused to let computers into West Bengal government offices until a few years ago.

Elsewhere in India, it was easier to shuck five decades of socialism and deregulate business. Seeing a potential boom in a country of 900 million people, IBM, Coca-Cola, General Motors, Kellogg and other corporate giants opened shops.

Between \$6 billion and \$7 billion investment poured into the industrial

states of western India like Maharashtra and Gujarat, where the cities are cleaner, telephones work and trade unions are weak.

By most standards, India's reforms are working. Industrial production is up and so are profits. Exports rose 17 per cent last year. Foreign currency reserves, which dipped to \$1 billion when Mr. Rao began the reforms, now stand at \$23 billion. After years of stagnation, 5.5 per cent growth looks attainable.

Until recently, West Bengal had looked on defiantly as the rest of the nation changed.

"The realization is dawning that profit and competitiveness are going to be the hallmark of success," said Sajiv Goenka, vice president of the R.P. Goenka Group, one of Calcutta's biggest companies.

Mr. Goenka recently fired 600 workers in one day without a murmur of protest from their union — something unthinkable a year ago, when unions would block the sacking of even the most inefficient worker.

Last September, Jyoti Basu, the state's 82-year-old elected leader, jettisoned Marxism for pragmatism and ordered the communist trade union to shed militancy. Without consulting his party, Mr. Basu opened the state to private investors.

Today, Japanese businessmen in dark blue suits jostle with rickshaws, trying to negotiate chaotic traffic in Calcutta's Dalhousie Square.

A year ago, Somnath Chatterjee was a Communist Party stalwart who was accusing Mr. Rao's reforms of spreading poverty instead of wealth. Now, he is in charge of wowing investment. He started by donning a business suit and going to the booming capitalist city-state of Singapore.

Mr. Chatterjee has renovated a 100-year-old British colonial building to create a plush office with marble floors, subdued lighting and

potted palms where he meets foreign businessmen and clears projects on the spot.

"Now the obstacles have gone," said Mr. Chatterjee. "Businessmen don't have to run from office to office to set up a business in West Bengal."

For 30 years, Chittabrata Majumdar, a chain-smoking trade union leader, exhorted workers to strike at the slightest provocation. Industry fled Calcutta because of the regular, often violent, labour unrest. Now, he is under more sober orders from communist leaders.

"The eight-hour day is a contract with the employer. The working class should abide by it," said Mr. Majumdar, vice president of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, India's biggest communist union.

When painters whitewashed a portrait of Karl Marx off the wall of Calcutta's town hall, it made headlines because Mr. Majumdar failed to call a strike.

Calcutta's new image is beginning to be noticed. "There is a lot of improvement. We saw we could make money," said Purnendu Chatterjee, a partner of the New York-based George Soros Group.

Soros is spending \$1.2 billion on an ambitious petrochemical project and an oil refinery in Haldia, 60 kilometres from Calcutta.

Malaysian Renong Overseas Corp. has expressed interest in building a \$1.2 billion, 700-kilometre toll road in the state. Three Singapore-based companies want to build hotels, shopping malls and hospitals.

Die-hard Marxists initially resisted the changes.

"But we cannot remain isolated and turn our state into a desert," said Anil Biswas, who edits the party's daily newspaper. "We are making policies in a capitalist society. How can we object to free market policies?"

to the King for his efforts for achieving peace in the region. They also expressed admiration for Jordan's efforts and stands in this field.

The King was also awarded the Ronald Reagan Freedom Award by the museum administration.

The King delivered a speech in which he expressed happiness for receiving this award and said "I will always respect this moment."

He also expressed his thanks for Mr. Reagan and described him as a courageous man of principles.

The King also said: "Honouring me is honouring of the people of Jordan whom I have served through my life."

Their Majesties were accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ali, Prince Hamzah and Prince Hassem, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Jordan's Ambassador in Washington Faysal Tarawneh and his wife.

King Hussein and Queen Noor met earlier with California Governor Pete Wilson and his wife.

King receives awards

(Continued from page 1)
time to stand by us as we embark on this new era of history in the Middle East," the King said.

Later the King said he was moved by the museum.

"The museum is a haunting reminder of man's despicable cruelty toward his fellow man," he said. "We must all continue to rid our world of such inhuman aberrations."

In his speech, the King said that honouring him was honouring Jordanian people who strive for peace for all the grandchildren of Abraham.

He pointed out that the new international borders between Jordan and Israel are now being patrolled by the armies of the two countries without the presence of foreign observers or U.N. forces.

The wall that separated the two countries is gradually disappearing like what had happened with the other wall (Berlin Wall), the King said, noting that then President Ronald Reagan had campaigned for its removal.

There are those who have limited visions and those who live in the dark and prefer to work for death and destruction instead of life, prosperity and human dignity, the King said referring to those opposed to peace.

Tolerance and understanding in their small world must be possible, he said.

The King pointed out that the U.S. had always been a true friend of Jordan and that the two friends stood by each other in the cold war era. Now the U.S. and Jordan are partners in formulating a better future for people," he said.

The centre also awarded Queen Noor another award in appreciation of her contribution in achieving peace. Their Majesties also paid a visit to the Ronald Reagan presidential library and museum and centre for public affairs.

John Gavin, former U.S. ambassador to Mexico and General Vernon Walters, former U.S. ambassador to U.N., expressed their thanks

300 killed in Algeria

(Continued from page 1)

any casualties among the troops in the latest operation.

Reports on security issues have to be cleared with the authorities who, diplomats say, are at best selective in what is allowed to be printed in the battle against well-armed fundamentalists.

Al Watan said the military was backed by helicopters when it struck at the fundamentalist guerrillas.

The militants were to slip into the capital to help colleagues based in the city's teeming fundamentalist hothouses, such as Bah Al Oued and Hussein Dey, in the bloody battle against the authorities.

Two years ago, in an attack on which censorship was lifted after the authorities said they had hunted down and killed the assailants, armed militants in March 1993 stormed an army bar-

racks at Bouzoul, some 120 kilometres south of Algiers. They cut the throats of at least 20 soldiers before they fled with trucks loaded by arms.

Last November, army commander, Colonel Djeloul Hadj Chetif was gunned down during a central Algiers gunbattle between troops and militants.

A senior French military source said in January that the Algerian army was starting to chalk up successes over Muslim fundamentalist guerrillas, thanks to new tactics backed by military equipment including helicopter gunships.

He said army successes had generally forced militants to move in small groups instead of the company-sized units they had been able to deploy before in the countryside.

Anwar Haddam, an exiled figure of the Islamic Salvation Front, the outlawed fun-

damentalist movement, said in an interview published Friday in a Moroccan newspaper that there was "no organic link" between the armed groups and the front, a "political" organisation.

The Islamic Salvation Army is usually described as the front's armed wing, but Mr. Haddam indicated this was not so.

Mr. Haddam nevertheless called on armed movements to submit to the leadership of the front.

"We ask these groups to submit to the authority of the elected leaders of the (front)," Mr. Haddam was quoted as saying by Al Alam, the paper of the Moroccan opposition Istiqlal Party.

"We don't want the struggle between the people and military institutions to transform into a struggle between (armed) movements," Mr. Haddam said.



Housing nightmare for S. Africa's homeless

By Rich Mkhondo
Reuters

LENASIA, South Africa — Farouk Bapoo waved his documents at a regional housing minister, showing he had been on a waiting list for a government house for 21 years.

But the minister's bodyguards pushed him away. He had to be content with hurling insults at officials.

"I wanted him to see for himself that I cannot wait for a house any longer," Mr. Bapoo said.

He was one of hundreds of squatters who recently broke into empty houses in Johannesburg's Lenasia suburb, formerly an Indian area.

But like the others he left empty-handed and the houses have now been allocated to their "rightful tenants."

The African National

Congress (ANC) led government of national unity, which took power after the historic all-race elections last April, promised to build a million houses during the next five years.

But politicians and political analysts say it will not be able to fulfill its election promises.

The ANC-led regional government of Gauteng, the most populous province embracing the commercial and industrial heartland around Johannesburg and its teeming black townships, is under increasing pressure to meet its pledges.

Politicians and analysts say land and property invasions across the country have been exacerbated by the emergence of new civic bodies, which are prepared to challenge President Nelson Mandela's popularly-elected government.

"The ANC government is finding it difficult to man-

age the expectations they have created," said squatter leader Basil Douglas.

"For a decade I lived in my car... This government promised us houses. When they did not keep their promises, we made it easy for them by moving into the empty houses," Mr. Bapoo told Reuters.

Regional Housing Minister Dan Mofokeng has tried to dampen the expectations of squatters.

"We do not believe in land invasions and house invasions and flat invasions. We want to appeal to you to really consider moving out to allow a committee to allocate houses according to the waiting list," he said during a fact-finding visit to Lenasia.

Mr. Mofokeng's boss Tokyo Sexwale, premier of Gauteng province including Johannesburg, faces a mammoth task if he is to live up to his pledge of building 150,000 houses by

the end of the year. So far less than 500 have been put up in the province out of 870 nationally.

Squatters, who say they endured apartheid bureaucracy for decades, now accuse Mr. Mandela's government of not doing anything to get rid of the red tape.

"There were 13 of us sharing my parents' two-bedroomed house," said squatter Christina Jenkins. "When Mandela came to power we thought things will improve, but instead they are getting worse."

Mr. Mofokeng ordered police to evict the squatters from the houses they had illegally occupied.

For several days police said they were finding it difficult to arrest the majority of squatters, because most were loitering on the streets rather than staying in the houses.

When police eventually arrested some of them,

others erected shacks on empty plots. Lenasia's permanent residents were up in arms, saying this would devalue their houses, increase crime and spread disease in the area.

Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city, is surrounded by sprawling shantytowns.

No official figures are available for the number of people living in "informal housing" but South Africa's independent Urban Foundation said in 1993 there were 7.7 million people.

The ANC's housing policy will cost five times the projected amount of \$10 million rand (\$142 million) for all nine regions.

A regional housing board catering for the needs of only four provinces including Gauteng said it had received more than 300,000 applications for housing subsidies worth more than 2.5 billion rand (\$690 million).

While Brits fume, Clinton plays Irish politics

By George Gedda
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Given the populous Irish-American precincts in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, President Bill Clinton's wading into the Northern Ireland morass on the side of Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams last week was undoubtedly good ethnic politics.

What's still not clear is whether it was good foreign policy.

Domestically, there has been a wave of word of dissent about Mr. Clinton's decision to declare Mr. Adams a man of peace and good will. Mr. Adams was routinely denied U.S. visas in an earlier era because of his links to the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

But while Mr. Adams exulted, Britain fumed.

Peter Rodman, of the Nixon Centre for Peace and Freedom, said Mr. Clinton's intervention over Britain's objections "is very risky and very damaging."

"Britain is the most steadfast ally we have had on the planet," and its judgment on this sensitive issue should be respected by Washington, Mr. Rodman said.

But Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the Brookings Institution believes that judgment is too harsh because of the gains made since Mr. Clinton's involvement has done more good than harm thus far, he said, acknowledging that the situation could sour.

For now, though, a truce declared six months ago is holding and there is more hope in Northern Ireland than at any time in a

quarter-century.

It's neither new nor unusual for U.S. presidents to shape their foreign policy with an eye towards politically potent ethnic, racial or religious groups. No country is as diverse or has the breadth of foreign policy interests as the United States.

"The American political system is peculiarly susceptible to ethnically based pressures," said Mr. Sonnenfeldt, a onetime aide to former secretary of state Henry Kissinger.

At times, it's difficult to say whether policies are driven by merits or local politics. One example of the ambiguity is the administration's push for NATO membership for Poland. In weighing that issue, is Mr. Clinton able to ignore the large Polish-American vote in up for grabs Illinois, for example?

There is little doubt that the congressional black caucus helped Mr. Clinton shape U.S. policy towards Haiti. It also had a decisive impact on inducing the Congress to impose sanctions on South Africa nine years ago.

American-Jews have weighed in on Middle East policy for years, and lately, Arab-Americans are being heard from more than before. Greek-Americans, sometimes in league with Armenians, try, often successfully, to head off a U.S. tilt towards Turkey.

The south Florida Cuban exile community carried little weight among policymakers 15 years ago, but nowadays — thanks to a combination of money, organisation and tenacity — exiled leaders such as Miami's Jorge Mas Canosa exert a crucial influence over U.S.-Cuban policy.

In the memorable phrase of the Wall Street Journal's Carla Ann Robbins, "when Mas Canosa says jump, politicians lace up their sneakers."

The centrepiece of the U.S. policy towards Cuba is the trade embargo, often the subject of derision abroad. The last time the embargo came to a vote in the U.N. General Assembly, only Israel voted with the United States.

French President Francois Mitterrand calls the embargo stupid and, in a gesture of defiance, invited President Fidel Castro to a glittering luncheon at the presidential palace in Paris last Monday.

Mr. Castro felt vindicated but, in Washington, his tormentors on Capitol Hill were busy working on legislation to tighten the embargo still further, with Mas Canosa's blessing.

Childhood is fleeting in Bangladesh

By Shahriar Shahid
Reuters

DHAKA — More than three million poor children in Bangladesh's cities eke out a living in 125 types of odd jobs ranging from garbage picking to prostitution, and their meagre earnings often keep their families from starving.

Chronic poverty continues to push boys and girls into the tough, competitive, unregulated Bangladesh labour market, the victims and society's leaders say.

The working children, who constitute 12 per cent of the total labour force, work at least eight hours daily, seven days a week to support their families, according to social welfare department statistics.

They earn on average 10 taka (0.25 cents) a day — or just over \$90 a year in a country with an annual per capita income of \$210.

"If I become jobless my entire family will starve," Mohammad Nasim, an 11-year-old shoeshine boy,

says. Mohammad represents an ever-growing army of underprivileged children in the Bangladesh capital, Dhaka.

Besides working in factories, repair workshops and business houses, they earn their livings picking through garbage, selling wastepaper and carrying loads in the local markets.

With large numbers of people migrating into big cities due to lack of work in the countryside, the number of street children continues to rise.

Their miseries have hardly diminished due to limited efforts by the government and a few voluntary organisations to give them better lives.

"They try to help us," said Shaiful Islam, who has been picking garbage for seven years.

But the resources to fight the problem are far from enough and so, as Shaiful put it, "we still have to fight with dogs and crows sifting

through rubbish dumps for anything eatable or worth selling that brings some money to buy food."

Some non-government organisations run schools for the street children, mostly after work hours, trying to educate them in the basics of life.

"We also try to infuse into them the hopes for a better future," Talebur Rahman, a teacher at one such school, said. "But we can't promise them anything. That's something only the government or a perfected social system can do."

"Schools providing flexible hours to children who are obliged to work to help their parents are not discouraged," said an official with the underprivileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP).

The private UCEP has so far provided non-formal and technical education to nearly 10,000 poor children in the country.

"The assurance of the

rights of children remain mostly confined to books and mere political rhetoric. They are hardly backed by administrative action," said the official, who asked not to be identified.

Girls live in comparatively more dire conditions than the boys.

"The number of girls working in factories are still insignificant," said an executive of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Criticising attempts to ban child workers in Bangladesh garment factories, especially by the U.S. administration, he said: "If turned away, most of the girls would possibly join prostitution."

"They will do this because employment is not readily available but they must need a living for themselves and their families."

Bangladesh has imposed strict restrictions on garment factories using child labour as both local and foreign vigilance teams

monitor the issue, an official said. He declined to give details.

Social workers say there are numerous reasons for children taking to the streets in Third World countries such as Bangladesh.

Over 50 per cent of families in Bangladesh's 110 million population live below the poverty line because they cannot afford a diet of 2,122 calories, according to the World Bank.

These families are unable to support their children, who are generally half-fed, ill-clothed and in poor health.

Organised crime gangs prey on them, stealing children and forcing them into begging or prostitution. Sometimes parents give their children to unknown traffickers on promises of jobs they believe would save them from abject poverty.

Many of the street children come from fatherless homes.

Trade concerns dog dollar; investors remain coy

LONDON (R) — The foreign exchange market's attention is firmly fixed on global trade imbalances now that the embers of inflation are barely glowing in most industrialised countries, financial analysts said Friday.

The dollar has spiralled down 12 per cent against the yen to record lows since the start of the year with the market shuddering at even aggressive central bank intervention.

The United States' trade dilemma was brought into sharp focus this week with the January deficit yawning 68.4 per cent to \$12.23 billion.

"In terms of fundamentals the market is definitely looking at these colossal trade imbalances," said Nikki Nelson-Smith, economist at Hambros Bank.

The U.S. trade gap with Europe widened by a staggering 532 per cent in January while the gap with Japan narrowed by a paltry 12.5 per cent. A falling currency should close a trade gap by making exports more competitive and imports more expensive.

"It's hard to conclude that the dollar can do anything but go down further, particularly against the yen," Mr. Nelson-Smith said. "With the dollar at record lows against

both the mark and the yen figures like this are quite incredible."

The dollar is also down around 10 per cent against the mark, in part because it is being dragged lower by the mighty yen, but also because Germany with its independent central bank and excellent track record on inflation is seen as a safe haven.

The dollar is also suffering from the fallout of the recent Mexican crisis with collapsing markets in South America making a big dent in U.S. exports to the continent. Figures this week showed the trade balance with Mexico turning from a surplus of \$19 million to a deficit of \$864 million.

This leaves Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan in a bit of a "catch-22" at next Tuesday's regular policy meeting. If he fails to raise rates as many in the market expect him to do, he risks rates it will hit the South American markets and the dollar will suffer.

But a rate rise would help to dampen domestic demand. Unless there is enough domestic resources to export you can't export anything anyway," said Tony Norfield, treasury economist at ABN-Amro. "And the U.S. is run-

ning pretty close to full capacity... that is the argument for raising rates even though the economy is slowing down."

The Bank of Japan is clearly wringing its hands over the yen's rise and has been in the foreign exchange market almost on a daily basis to try and rein it in.

The 225-share Nikkei average, the Tokyo stock market's benchmark, ended at its lowest level in 31 months on Friday with investors rattled by the dollar's plunge and its impact on corporate balance sheets as exporters' overseas income dwindles.

In Germany it is a similar picture with share prices skidding to a 17-month low triggered by a negative reassessment of company prospects following the sharp rise of the mark.

International Monetary Fund figures show that just over 50 per cent of Japan's trade is with the United States but for Germany it is only just over 20 per cent.

Analysts said this is why the Bank of Japan is extremely worried about the soaring yen while the Bundesbank is far more relaxed about the rocketing mark, even though the German currency is also extremely firm against some of its other trading partners like France.

World Bank plans to open office in Amman

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government has given the World Bank the green light to open a regional office in Amman and the bank is expected to open the facility soon, officials said Saturday.

The World Bank has three other offices in the immediate region; in Cairo, Egypt, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Ankara, Turkey.

Setting up an office in Amman is expected to facilitate the World Bank's involvement in various sectoral projects in Jordan as well as its role as coordinator for international aid for the Palesti-

nians.

Finance Minister Basel Jarad was quoted as saying in an interview with the Arabic-language daily Al Ra'i that the Economic Council recommended the government to grant permission for the World Bank to open an office in Amman.

The presence of a World Bank office will enhance Jordan's regional role, the minister was quoted as saying.

The World Bank has maintained a permanent presence in Jordan since early the 1990s to help the Kingdom implement development projects and programmes designed to improve the efficiency of its various sectors.

A World Bank representative used to operate out of the Ministry of Planning with support staff seconded by the Jordanian government. The bank made a formal request to open an office in Amman last year.

Officials noted that the World Bank's involvement in projects under implementation in Jordan has grown steadily since the 1990s.

The World Bank, through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association, have extended loans worth JD 585 million to Jordan.

The bulk of the credit came after Jordan started im-

plementing an economic recovery and restructuring programme in coordination with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1989.

Officials said they expected the opening of the Amman office of the World Bank to come soon, noting that Amman will host a conference on the economic development of the Middle East and North Africa in October as a follow-up to the Casablanca meeting held last year.

No World Bank official was immediately available for comment.

The World Bank is expected to play a high-profile role in the summit in the way

of helping advance project proposals and implementation.

In the run-up to the Casablanca conference, the World Bank was closely involved in finalising project proposals that Jordan presented at the gathering.

The World Bank is also the designated coordinator for the \$2.4 billion in international aid pledged to develop the economy of the Palestinian territories in October 1993, shortly after the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel signed a declaration of principles calling for interim autonomy in the territories pending final status negotiations in 1996.

GCC top bankers to discuss BIS adequacy rule tomorrow

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Central bank governors from six Arab Gulf states will meet in Riyadh Monday to discuss progress in attempts to force their banks to meet international capital adequacy standards, the official Gulf News Agency (GNA) reported Saturday.

The officials from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will review results of contacts between their new joint bank auditing body and the Basle

Committee, which was created by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) to oversee implementation of its capital adequacy proposals for banks worldwide.

"The central bank governors will discuss a memorandum on relations with the Basle Committee following recent meetings and the visit to the region by the committee's chairman," GNA said.

GCC states have held regular meetings with the Basle Committee in a bid to persuade it to drop them from its classification of developing nations as high risk countries in lending activities due to their low capital adequacy.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer and exporter, was the only developing country to have been excluded from that classification on the grounds it is the fifth biggest creditor to the International Monetary Fund.

GCC and other developing nations have criticised BIS over such a rule, which they said would make it more difficult for them to obtain loans and finance much-needed economic reforms.

But several countries, especially those in the Gulf, have embarked on reforms to strengthen their banking sector and force all banks to raise their capital adequacy, the ratio between shareholders' equity and assets.

Basle has set a floor of eight per cent for adequacy to ensure banks worldwide have enough funds to face any financial crisis.

Although Saudi Arabia was exempted, many of its banks have boosted capital so they can give more credit after the government set a ceiling on loans.

The biggest capital increase in the region came from the Saudi National Commercial Bank, which raised it by nearly 200 times from 30 million riyals (\$8 million) to six billion riyals (\$1.6 billion).

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), authorities have instructed the 47 banks to boost adequacy to at least 10 per cent through raising capital or merger.

Six of them have increased capital, pushing the overall shareholders' equity to around \$4.98 billion from \$4.33 billion. With assets totalling \$39.6 billion at the end of 1994, adequacy topped 12 per cent.

The central bank has in the past been reluctant to try to set the dollar's level against other currencies.

W. Bank, Gaza goods to get duty-free U.S. access

WASHINGTON (USIA) — By early April, many products from the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be able to enter the U.S. market duty free.

President Bill Clinton has designated the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), effective April 7, his administration announced in a March 24 proclamation.

Under the GSP programme, some 4,600 agricultural and industrial goods from designated developing countries may enter the United States duty free. Those items usually not eligible for duty-free treatment are those most sensitive to U.S. industries, such as textiles and footwear.

Still unclear was how much

the West Bank and Gaza Strip will actually benefit from the change because until recently aggregate trade figures in the region were incorporated into those of Israel, one U.S. trade official said. He did expect citrus to be one export sector to gain from elimination of tariffs.

"The extension of the Generalized System of Preferences programme to the West Bank and Gaza Strip pursuant to this proclamation applies only to goods produced in the areas for which arrangements are being established for Palestinian Interim Self-Government, as set forth in Articles I, III, and IV of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements," the president said in the proclamation.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY MARCH 26, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Attending to routine chores early in the day will give you more time to spend with friends later in the day. Cooperate more with others.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your hunches are not good early in the day, but become more helpful later. Join good friends for recreational purposes and you're bound to have a good time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Make plans to have more income in the days ahead. Take time to improve your appearance and you can easily impress others, especially higher-ups.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You can now plan how to have added abundance in the future. A wiser attitude towards a loved one today brings excellent results.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Study the amount of effort needed to gain an important goal today. Show that you will go to any length to please the one you love with much affection.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Handle any civic duties ahead of you early in the day and later you can enjoy the social side of life. Be happy and active in any endeavour.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Look over your surroundings and make plans for improvement. Be sure to control your temper at all times today or you could hurt loved ones.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Plan how to complete your regular chores with greater efficiency and fewer interruptions. Study statements for possible errors in your favour in the evening.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You could easily make a costly mistake where finances are concerned so be on the alert today. Engage in your favourite hobby and find much happiness.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You may find it difficult to get things done early in the day, but later you can make up for lost time. Strive for increased happiness.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Get an early start on the tasks you have to do instead of complaining and you get fine benefits in the long run. Be logical in your thinking.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Others around you may seem pessimistic about the future but don't let this influence you. Maintain a cheerful manner in the face of any adversity. It will be short-lived.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword by Roger Jurgovan

ACROSS

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- Fill with reverence
- Clay
- Landed snipe
- Area
- Adapt
- Organic
- Medieval chest
- Citrus fruit
- Pre-
- Mile
- Smile
- Early Persian
- Captured GI
- According to
- Gentlemen's preference?
- Derby
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- Mr. Dunn
- "Confusion" (Tennyson)
- Law firm
- Poker's place
- Changed parade
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- Relish
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Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: DECAY VAPOR BESTOW PIRACY
Answer: Otan found in a church steeple — AIDS OF 'PRAY'

British trade performance best in nine years

LONDON (R) — Britain's world trade deficit shrank dramatically in 1994 to the lowest level for nine years, the government said Friday — welcome good news to a deeply unpopular Conservative administration.

The current account deficit at just \$168 million (\$267 million) compared with \$1.1 billion (\$1.8 billion) in 1993.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke hailed the figures, saying "by the end of the year output was over four per cent higher, unemployment over a third of a million lower... and the current account had returned to surplus."

"The British economy is on course to keep up this excellent performance this year as well," he said.

The current account deficit was far better than most economists expected and well below the \$4 billion (\$6.36 billion) forecast by Mr. Clarke in his November budget.

The major improvement in the deficit was driven by a massive surplus on invisible trade, which covers banking,

tourism and insurance, investment income from abroad and transfers between Britain and its European Union partners.

In particular, proceeds from investment income soared to a record \$11.2 billion (\$17.8 billion) from \$1.6 billion (\$2.6 billion) in 1993, mainly due to higher earnings by overseas units of British companies.

"Earnings from direct investments abroad were so good, with Britain being one of the leaders in this field, and also because banks have been paying out less interest on their borrowings abroad," said Jill Leyland, economic adviser at British Invisibles, a trade promotion body.

For much of the past decade economists have been concerned Britain's shrunken manufacturing base meant a serious trade deficit was a permanent feature of the economic landscape.

The fear was that higher economic growth would simply tempt consumers to buy more imports, tipping the trade balance deep into the red in an action-replay of the 1980s spending binge.

Federal Reserve expected to adopt wait-and-see attitude

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The Federal Reserve (Fed) is expected to maintain a wait-and-see attitude on interest rates because of signs that U.S. economic growth is slowing, analysts said.

Economic indicators for January and February have been mixed, leading analysts to believe that the Fed Open Market Committee on Tuesday will put off imposing what would be the eighth interest rate hike in 13 months.

The Fed began raising key rates in February 1993 to forestall inflation by slowing economic growth.

"There is too much evidence of a slowdown and too many Fed governors have suggested that the impact of previous Fed tightening moves have yet to be felt in the economy," said Elliott Platt of the economic analysis group Donaldson, Lufkin, Jenrette.

Mr. Platt said that in a poll of 37 economists, 36 expected the Fed to take no action on key short-term interest rates.

The Federal Reserve has boosted the rate that banks charge each other for overnight loans from three per cent one year ago to six per cent.

Federal Reserve Chairman

Alan Greenspan indicated that the committee itself was uncertain. "The jury is still out on whether the economy is slowing down sufficiently," he said recently.

One of the Federal Reserve governors, Janet Yellen, said that as of March 15 there were growing indications that the economy was slowing down but she declined to say if she had drawn any conclusion.

Consumer and construction spending, which are the most sensitive to higher interest rates have been the first to come down. Retail sales dropped 0.4 per cent in February and housing starts dropped by 200,000 units since the end of 1994.

A 0.8 per cent drop in durable goods orders for last month, a figure released on Friday, was the first real sign that manufacturing had slowed. The slowdown in cars, computers and other big-ticket items was the first since September.

Durable goods orders rose by 13.9 per cent last year, the largest increase in 16 years.

Another sign of a coming slowdown could be a five per cent drop in exports, partially caused by a plunge in Mex-

ican peso that made U.S. goods too expensive for most Mexicans.

Mitchell Held of Smith, Barney, Harris, Upham and Co. is one of the few analysts who does not rule out the possibility that the Federal Reserve will move to raise interest rates on Tuesday.

"If you look at the February employment data, the industrial production data, and inflation data, these seem to suggest that (economic growth) is not dead yet," he said.

Industrial production jumped 0.5 per cent in February with industrial capacity usage at the highest rate in 15 years. Unemployment dropped 0.3 percentage points to 5.4 per cent, the same as in December and matching the lowest level in four years.

The U.S. economy created 318,000 jobs.

But even if the Fed decides to raise interest rates now, it would do little to raise the dollar against the German mark and yen, analysts say.

The central bank has in the past been reluctant to try to set the dollar's level against other currencies.

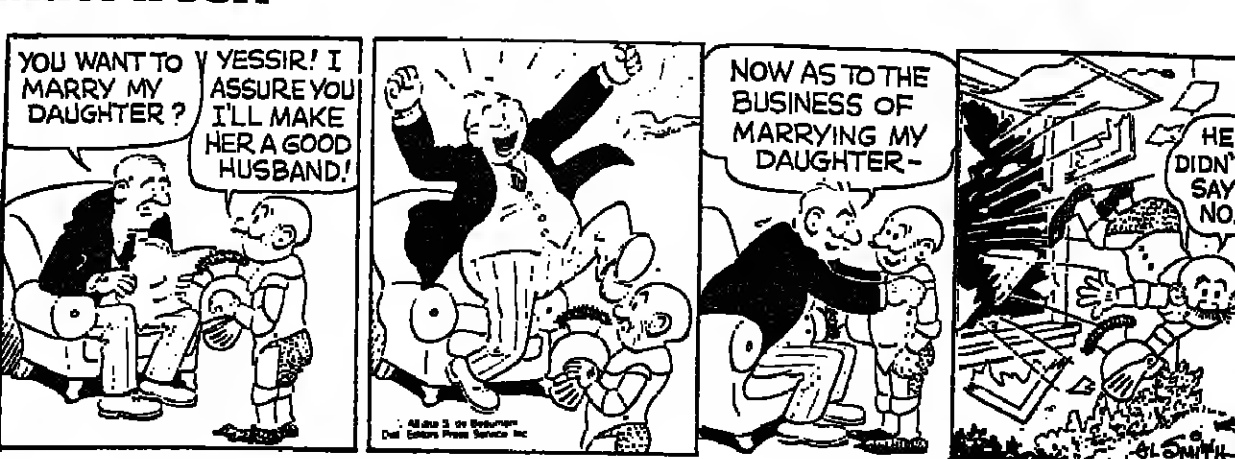
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NAJOB

ECIDD

ALFFEB

DRIZAW

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

(Answer tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: DECAY VAPOR BESTOW PIRACY
Answer: Otan found in a church steeple — AIDS OF 'PRAY'

business daily beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Investments surge in January

★ A TOTAL of 581 companies capitalised at JD 61.66 million were registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade in January 1995 compared to 610 companies with JD 17.6 million capital in January 1994. Of the total, 83 companies with JD 17.87 million capital were industrial, 360 companies with JD 39.57 million capital were commercial and the rest were 23 contracting firms (JD 1.65 million) and 115 service companies (JD 2.57 million).

Seven public shareholding companies (three industrial and four commercial) had a total investment of JD 43.2 million (JD 14.2 million industrial and JD 29.0 million commercial) capital or 70 per cent of the overall capital invested in January 1995 (Al Aswaj).

★ THE NATIONAL Poultry Slaughterhouses Company, a public shareholding firm with a JD 10 million capital, decided to set up two slaughterhouses, one south of the Kingdom and the other in the north. The two slaughterhouses will have an overall capacity of 10,000 birds per hour with a storage capacity of 3,000 tonnes for frozen production and 500 tonnes for fresh output. The slaughterhouse in the south will be built on a 950-dunum area in Al Qatranah while the northern one will be built in Al Mafrqa. The company has appointed the Belgian company Smits Engineering as consultants for technical supervision (Al Aswaj).

★ JORDANIANS LOSE between JD 10 to JD 15 million a year as a result of not claiming back the value added tax (VAT) they pay on all kinds of services while in Europe on business missions, says Husam Joudeh, a Jordanian businessman. Mr. Joudeh attributes such a loss to either the lack of knowledge about European laws or to inexperience in dealing with such a process. He explained that assuming about 10,000 Jordanian businessmen visit Europe each year and that they obtain receipts for about JD 10,000 worth of services rendered to them, the businessmen can claim back at least 15 per cent of VAT on their bills, or JD 15 million (Al Aswaj).

★ THE JORDAN Training Company hiked exports last year by 143 per cent to JD 4,595,000, or 45 per cent of total sales which totalled JD 10.1 million. Sales in 1993 amounted to JD 8.4 million. The company last year made a pre-tax profit of JD 949,200 of which JD 749,800 came from the tanning division and JD 199,300 from the shoe division. The board of directors is recommending the distribution of dividends at a rate of 16 per cent (Al Aswaj).

Credit Lyonnais plan extra 2,000 job cuts

PARIS (AFP) — The cash-strapped Credit Lyonnais bank, which is caught in a controversial rescue, plans to shed about 2,000 jobs this year in addition to about 1,500 jobs shed in the last 12 months, bank president Jean Peyrelevade has said. The bank would cut "about 2,000 jobs" in the space of a year, he said. When the rescue of the bank, amounting to \$27 billion, was announced Friday, Mr. Peyrelevade had said that more than 1,500 jobs would be lost on a voluntary basis between the spring of 1995 and the spring of 1996. Mr. Peyrelevade, speaking on French radio, also repeated strong criticism of hostility to the rescue expressed Tuesday by the French BNP and Societe Generale banks. They had said that the state-backed rescue amounted to a distortion of competition and challenged "the real financial advantage given to Credit Lyonnais" by the state and the "real scale of contribution asked for."

Jordan plans \$1b offshore reexport refinery

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuter

AMMAN — Jordan is studying offers by international refiners to build a \$1 billion offshore reexport refinery close to its Red Sea port of Aqaba, the energy minister said Friday. "There is now serious study to build a new offshore refinery with our intention to have it for reexport of refined products and also to supply our forecast future higher needs," said Samih Darwazah, energy and mineral resources minister.

Mr. Darwazah told Reuters in an interview that the estimated 140,000 barrels per day crude processing refinery will be a private venture on a commercial basis. It will have minimal state control by a regulatory body overseeing its operations. The minister said three major groups of U.S., Japanese and Jordanian firms, he did not disclose, had shown keen interest.

"They will present their feasibility studies and we hope in six months that serious work will start and we would have decided with whom we are going to start the project," he said. Mr. Darwazah said the refinery would be set up on a "build, operate, and transfer basis" with the foreign refiners "putting up the capital, operating it for a certain number of years to be agreed upon and then transferring its ownership to Jordan."

Its investors would be free to fix prices according to market levels. Jordan, in return for land and tax concessions would get "priority in supplying its needs." Jordan, with an equity share, would purchase products at market prices. Iraqi crude oil was currently supplying an estimated 60,000 barrels per day of Jordan's crude needs under a U.N. sanctioned accord renewed earlier in 1995, he added.

Mr. Darwazah said the new refinery would meet higher forecast products demand in a few years that a sole refinery run by Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company cannot then meet. Mr. Darwazah cited imports of any extra 60,000 tonnes of liquid gas in 1994 on top of 125,000 tonnes produced in 1994. The refinery, operating under an attractive investment and tax package, would be free to get its crude from neighbouring oil producing states or any source along commercial terms.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - JORDAN				
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 25/03/1995				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PSC	800	149600	186.830	187.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	3715	16270	4.350	4.390
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK / NEW	3925	16861	4.260	4.280
THE HOUSING BANK	2000	12080	6.020	6.040
JORDAN KAWAT BANK	637	1845	2.900	2.900
JORDAN GULF BANK	500	585	1.210	1.170
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	3510	13190	3.760	3.760
BEIT KUNAL SAVINGS/INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1250	3758	3.000	3.010
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	51250	56235	1.070	1.110
PELLADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	5500	6763	1.230	1.230
BANKS SECTOR	73349	278353	INDEX NUMBER: 137.79	CHANGE: +0.11%
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	11500	29168	2.540	2.510
INSURANCE SECTOR	11500	29168	INDEX NUMBER: 134.54	CHANGE: -0.14%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	5025	7861	1.570	1.550
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER / NEW	2450	3651	1.490	1.490
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	1750	12368	6.850	7.050
TRAID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	500	470	0.990	0.940
JORDAN KEMERAL	100	275	2.800	2.750
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	206	1043	5.090	5.090
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS / NEW	1271	6241	4.890	4.950
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	8500	24058	2.940	2.940
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	450	854	1.920	1.900
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	650	743	1.120	1.150
MACHINERY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	8300	5312	0.640	0.640
UNIVERSAL HOODING & CONCOORSE TEXTILES	2049	45710	2.290	2.280
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	400	1344	3.350	3.360
SERVICES SECTOR	49651	110768	INDEX NUMBER: 125.74	CHANGE: +0.02%
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	21696	64869	2.990	2.990
THE JORDAN CEMENT / NEW	330	1464	4.500	4.500
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	462	4247	9.230	9.200
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	300	1041	3.470	3.470
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCK MILLS	7750	57100	7.400	7.350
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	20155	113630	4.030	4.030
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	3637	21395	5.890	5.800
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	5680	15142	2.680	2.680
DAR AL DAMA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	5950	44516	7.480	7.480
ARAB FERTILISER & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	1400	860	0.610	0.610
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	6000	38675	6.350	6.400
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	47300	29774	0.620	0.630
ARAB RAISIN CONVEYING & TRADING	1500	1500	1.000	1.000
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	2950	3309	1.100	1.110
JORDAN ROCKWOL INDUSTRIES	1250	803	0.640	0.650
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MACHO/JINCO	1550	1550	1.000	1.000
ERTONLINE CARLS & WIFE MANUFACTURING	2700	3753	1.320	1.390
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	8400	18509	2.200	2.210
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	3500	12193	3.530	3.510
JORDAN MODERN INDUSTRIES	1450	286	1.950	1.950
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	162075	463621	INDEX NUMBER: 118.07	CHANGE: -0.05%
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	162075	463621	INDEX NUMBER: 139.11	CHANGE: +0.04%
GRAND TOTAL	296575	881910	INDEX NUMBER: 139.11	CHANGE: +0.04%
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	95003			
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET	96215			

Foreigners abandon French bonds in '94

PARIS (AFP) — Foreign investors sold French state bonds worth a net figure of 188 billion francs (\$37.6 billion) in 1994, official figures for the balance of current transactions have showed. The overall balance showed a surplus of 54.4 billion francs, and the balance of flows in short-term capital showed a contrasting surplus of 237 billion francs.

Foreigners who had sold the franc heavily during the currency crisis in July 1993, had returned slowly to the franc, and the net balance of this trading had shown a surplus of 504 billion francs in 1994 from a deficit of 505 billion francs in 1993.

In 1993 foreigners had bought a net amount of 79 billion francs' worth of official paper. The balance of dealing in state bonds, other bonds and shares showed a net outflow of 169 billion francs in 1994 from an inflow of 194 billion francs in 1993.

French investors invested a net amount of 120 billion francs in foreign scrip from a net outflow of 176 billion francs in 1993.

In total, there was a net outflow of nearly 300 billion francs on the balance of flows in investment paper in 1994 from an inflow of 16 billion francs.

Iraq promises to give priority to Jordan traders

AMMAN (R) — Iraq has promised to give Jordanian traders priority in business once U.N. economic sanctions are eased, a Jordanian official said Saturday.

Haider Murad, head of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce who returned Friday from a visit to Baghdad, also said Iraq was optimistic that sanctions would be eased soon and that they would be allowed to sell oil to spend on much-needed food and medical supplies. "The Iraqis, including the officials we met, thanked us for Jordan's stand towards Iraq and promised to give us priority in their trade and industry dealings when the embargo falls apart," Mr. Murad told Reuters in an interview.

"The situation is very bad in Iraq," he said. "Iraq is facing hunger, they have a shortage of food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies and our trip has only increased our insistence on having the sanctions removed."

Jordan's government, under mounting pressure from its recession-hit business community, recently began calling for a serious consideration of Iraq's appeal for an easing or lifting of the embargo. Past governments were critical of Baghdad. Mr. Murad headed a team of 40 top traders in meetings with Iraq's ministers of trade and health as well as local business leaders.

He signed a cooperation deal with Iraq's chambers of trade to boost bilateral links — the second in less than five weeks with Iraq, which was Jordan's main market before the U.N. imposed sanctions after Baghdad invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The Jordanian and Iraqi federations of chambers of industry signed a cooperation protocol last month to exchange information and set up joint ventures in food, textiles and construction. Bilateral trade has slipped to a fraction from nearly \$1 billion before 1990. But Iraq continues to rely on Jordan as its main gateway to the world and supplies Amman with all its crude oil needs at concessional terms.

Jordanian industrialists will hold a fair of their products in Baghdad by the end of next month, but like the government in Amman, they insist they are committed to enforcing sanctions. Jordan's business community, disappointed that last year's peace treaty with Israel has yet to reap fruit, are banking on Iraq and the Palestinians to give their economy a boost.

"Our main target is to have an open market with Iraq, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip," said a senior official.

Financial Jordan Times

In co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	New York Close
	Mar 23/95	Mar 24/95
Sterling Pound	1.5952	1.5940
Deutsche Mark	1.4055	1.4123
Swiss Franc	1.1625	1.1742
French Franc	4.9675	4.9885
Japanese Yen	88.20	88.95
European Currency Unit	1.2060	1.2007

Source: Reuters
European Closing: 4:00 a.m. (GMT)

European Closing: 4:00 a.m. (GMT)

Source: Reuters

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

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Brazilian Grand Prix

Schumacher crashes as Hill sets the pace

SAO PAULO, Brazil (AP) — Britain's Damon Hill jumped out ahead of the pack Friday to grab the provisional pole position for the Brazilian Grand Prix on Sunday, the season Formula One circuit opener.

The British driver had the fastest lap time of 1 minute, 20.081 seconds in his Williams Renault around the twisting 2.637-mile (4.25-kilometre) Interlagos circuit on the first day of time trials.

Gerhard Berger came in second in a Ferrari, three-tenths of a second behind Hill.

The predicted Hill-Michael Schumacher duel did not materialize on the overcast afternoon with temperatures reaching 28 degrees F (82 C).

The world champion German driver finished a disappointing sixth with a best lap of 1 minute, 22.131 seconds after crashing his Benetton Renault during his second lap.

Schumacher, at that point running fourth, spun out of control on the dangerous Laranjinha Curve, skidded backward over the grass and dirt runoff area, and slammed into a barrier of tires in front of a concrete wall.

The driver bounced out of his battered car and rushed back to his team's box in try to use the car of his teammate, Britain's Johnny Herbert. But neither he nor Herbert appeared for the rest of the day.

"I was lucky to hit the tire wall," he said. "The new safety measures that were developed sure did work well."

A Benetton mechanic, shortly after talking to Schumacher, said the driver lost control after a uni-ball link inside the steering column broke and prevented him from turning the wheel.

"This surprised us because during testing there was never any indication that this part of the car would give us



World champion Michael Schumacher of Germany covers his ears while mechanics start the engine of his Benetton-Ford at the Interlagos race track in Sao Paulo (AP photo)

problems," the mechanic said. He said the team would work through the night to correct the defect.

Britain's David Coulthard, the new, hot prospect of this

year's circuit, took third in his Williams Renault, three tenths of a second behind Berger.

The track is as bumpy as hell, quite unbelievable,"

said Coulthard, echoing several other drivers' complaints.

French driver Jean Alesi was fourth in a Ferrari with a best time of 1 minute, 21.655

seconds. Mika Hakkinen of Finland finished fifth in a McLaren-Mercedes posting a best lap of 1 minute, 22.017 seconds.

Olivier Panis of France was seventh in a Ligier Mugen Honda, Irish driver Eddie Irvine took eighth in a Jordan Peugeot, and Britain's Mark Blundell was ninth in a McLaren Mercedes.

Hometown favourite Rubens Barrichello, whose motor broke down during his warm-up lap half way through the session, returned in his teammate's Jordan Peugeot and finished 11th with a best lap of 1 minute, 23.350 seconds.

The effect of the new rules to increase driver safety was evident as the best time of the day was almost a full five seconds slower than the track record set in 1992 by Britain's Nigel Mansell for the Williams Renault team.

This year's 3-liter engines are about 100 horsepower down from last year's 3.5s.

Other new regulations changed the cars' aerodynamics so they could adhere better to the track, improved driver safety in the cockpit, and give more control to the driver and less to computerized aids.

Before the trials started, the International Automobile Federation settled a dispute the drivers, who hinted they would go on strike this year to protest FIA's position on super licenses.

The FIA super licence this year was changed from a permit to drive to a de facto contract that exempts the federation from blame in cases of accidents and bars the drivers from openly criticizing safety measures.

But on Friday morning, all the drivers opted to sign their super-license forms after receiving individual facsimile letters from Max Mosley, the federation president.

Koeman decides to quit Barcelona

BARCELONA (AFP) — Barcelona's Dutch star Ronald Koeman announced here Friday that he was quitting the club at the end of the season to return home to Holland.

"I am not leaving to join another club," said the stopper. "I am simply returning home for personal reasons."

Koeman rejected claims that he had had a row with Barcelona coach John Cruyff.

"My decision to leave has nothing to do with Cruyff. It is thanks to him I came to Barcelona and won so many titles," said Koeman.

Cruyff was full of praise for his fellow Dutchman.

"Everyone talks about Romarin, Stoichkov, or Laudrup but Koeman has been the most important player at Barcelona," said Cruyff.

"He always delivered. He never caused problems either inside or outside of the club, unlike some others," he added, a clear reference to Stoichkov who was ordered to take a holiday after he made some scathing remarks about his teammates following Barcelona's defeat in the European Champions Cup quarter-final at the hands of Paris St. Germain.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Romario hits hat-trick

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Romarin put injury and personal problems behind him to hit a hat-trick in a dramatic 3-2 win for Flamengo over Botafogo and settle a score with rival Tulin, the Rio championship's top-scorer, who as sent off. "Tulin has to understand that I am predestined, I am illuminated by God," Romario crowed after the play-off for an extra point in the next round of the championship. Romario, who has suffered a recent marriage break-up, has scored 11 times in the Rio championship, six less than Tulin. Thursday's hat-trick will not count because play-offs are considered extra games.

Turkish team will play in Cyprus

ANKARA (R) — Turkey will allow a national handball team to play in the Greek Cypriot side of the Mediterranean island in the first visit of its kind since a Turkish invasion divided Cyprus in 1974, an official said on Friday. The senior sports official told Reuters Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller approved the Turkish handball team's visit to the still divided city of Nicosia in March. Turkey and Cyprus have paired off in a draw by the European Handball Federation to play in a Men's European Championship.

Bordeaux captain handed 6-match ban

PARIS (R) — Bordeaux captain William Fruier was suspended for six matches by the French Soccer Federation on Friday in the latest of a series of sanctions against the struggling First Division side. The former international defender was one of three Bordeaux players sent off in a French Cup quarter-final against Strasbourg last week. Fruier, who contested a decision by the referee to award Strasbourg a penalty, had already been given a two-match ban this season after being sent off against Monaco.

UEFA chief: Cantona punishment severe

GENEVA (AFP) — Eric Cantona's two-week jail sentence for attacking a fan is too severe, Gerhard Aigner, secretary-general of the European Football Union (UEFA) said Friday. Cantona was released on bail on Thursday by a British court, pending an appeal against the sentence handed out by the Frenchman's kung-fu kick at a Crystal Palace supporter in January. But Aigner told AFP: "Two weeks in prison is too much, and out of proportion to what Eric Cantona did."

Two found guilty in match fixing

SINGAPORE (AP) — A court on Saturday convicted two people for match-fixing in an unfolding soccer bribery scandal that has widely tainted a 16-nation league tournament based in Malaysia. Ex-Singapore player K. Kannan was sentenced to 18 months in jail and the president of a local soccer club, Ong Kheng Hock, was given 2 1/2 years. Prosecutors said the two men offered Singapore national goalkeeper David Lee \$80,000 dollars (\$57,000) to keep the winning margin low in a May 13, 1994 match against Perlis, a Malaysian state. Fourteen Malaysian teams and neighboring Singapore and Brunei played in the hugely popular Football Association of Malaysia league tournament. In the fallout of the scandal, Singapore is not participating this year.

Marseille miss their chance

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Olympique Marseille missed their chance to go top of the French second division here on Friday night, when they were beaten 1-0 by leaders Guingamp. Lying second in the table, Marseille were a point behind their opponents before the kick-off but hopes of regaining the top spot were dashed by Charles-Edouard Cordon's 28th minute winner.

Shaquille O'Neal upstages Michael Jordan's homecoming

CHICAGO (AP) — Their names are everywhere. Their products, too.

Shaquille and Michael wear different shoes to leap over opponents, slurp down different drinks to curb their thirsts, use different games to lead their teams.

Their first meeting in two years went to Shaquille O'Neal. Rather, it went to him and his Orlando Magic teammates, who upstaged Michael Jordan's Chicago homecoming by beating the Bulls 106-99 on Friday night.

"All the attention is focused on him, especially in Chicago," said O'Neal, who had 24 points and 16 rebounds. "I can remember a few years ago when I was in high school with no money, no car, no clothes and watching him on TV, and now I'm on the same court. I'm just happy to be here. I'm glad Michael is back."

While Jordan was gone, Shaq became the marquee player in the NBA, the player everyone wanted to see, with his basket-quaking dunks and ferocious roars after stuffing the ball.

He was muscle and power, and he could, like Jordan, smile and joke. With Jordan's No. 23 jersey retired, O'Neal's No. 32 was a big seller.

"He laid the foundation with guys trying to emulate him, but there is only one Michael Jordan," O'Neal said in a congested Magic locker room where he took time to exchange greetings with film producer Spike Lee.

"If I'm mentioned in the same breath or in the same sentence, I'm not worried about anything, about being the marquee player," O'Neal said.

"There's enough for everybody to share. Everyone loves Michael Jordan. I've always been a Michael Jordan fan, it's an honour for me to be playing on the same court."

"Michael's back, look out Shaq," read one sign in the energized United Centre, where Jordan's retirement ceremony had been held less than five months earlier.

Jordan may be back, but he's still rusty. He finished with 21 points but only three second-half baskets, shot 7-of-23 and committed two crucial turnovers in the fourth quarter during Orlando's deciding run.

O'Neal can slam, and he can also rap. He's been in the movies. He's charming and wealthy, making about \$12.5 million a year in endorsements. And he's only 23.

Michael, at age 32, has been pulling in an estimated \$30 million a year in endorsements, and now with a comeback and a new number he's bound to be as popular as he ever was, if not more.

On the floor, even though he plays an entirely different position, O'Neal does what Jordan has done for so long. He makes his teammates better.

O'Neal and the Magic are trying to get where Michael and the Bulls once were — at the championship level. Jordan and the Bulls are trying to get back to where O'Neal and the Magic are right now — at the top of the Eastern Conference.

O'Neal had plenty of help Friday night, especially from Horace Grant, one of Jordan's key teammates when the Bulls ran off three straight NBA titles.

"It's strange playing against him, but I tried to approach this game as just another game," said Grant, adding that Jordan may have tired in the stretch of his 44-minute performance.

"Michael's Michael and Phil (Jackson) really wanted to win this game tonight."

Suns lose despite Barkley's career-high 26 rebounds

PHOENIX (AP) — The Houston Rockets overcame Charles Barkley's career-high 26 rebounds and 34 points to beat the Phoenix Suns 99-97.

The Rockets, 3-1 against Phoenix this season, won despite scoring only two points in the last 2:45. Sam Cassell made a foul shot with 36

seconds left for a 98-97 lead, and Hakeem Olajuwon added a foul shot with 11 seconds remaining for the 25th point.

Kevin Johnson had 27 points and 10 assists for the Suns. Kenny Smith scored 26 for Houston.

Sonics 122, Trail Blazers 118:

At Portland, Oregon, Gary Payton scored 32 points, one short of his career high, and the Seattle Supersonics held off the Portland Trail Blazers in an offensive shootout.

Payton made his first eight shots and was 15-for-17 from the field. His only misses came on a blocked layup

attempt and a 40-footer at the third-quarter buzzer.

Clifford Robinson scored 14 of his 215 points in the fourth quarter, including three-pointers.

Lakers 113, Bullets 103: At Inglewood, California, Vlade Divac had 25 points and 20 rebounds as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Washington Bullets for their third straight victory.

Elden Campbell followed Wednesday's career-high 32-point effort with 20 to help the Lakers beat Washington for the 19th time in 21 visits to the Forum.

Chris Webber scored a season-high 31 points and Gilbert Cheney added 25 for the Bullets.

Cavaliers 75, Hawks 74: Bobby Phillips' free throw with 16 seconds remaining gave the Cleveland Cavaliers victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Terrell Brandon scored nine points in the fourth quarter to keep Cleveland in the game, and Tyrone Hill made four straight free throws in the final minutes.

Hill had 24 points and 13 rebounds for Cleveland, which held the Hawks to 28 first-half points, a franchise low for Atlanta.

Blaylock's 20 points led the Hawks, which lost its second straight game and fourth in the last six.

Spurs 111, Timberwolves 97: At Minneapolis, David Robinson scored 29 points and sparked a third-quarter rally that blew the game open as the San Antonio Spurs defeated the Minnesota Tim-

berwolves.

Robinson scored eight points in a 21-8 run that began the third quarter, opening up an 80-58 lead for the Spurs, who have won six straight.

Robinson added 13 rebounds, and Avery Johnson had 18 points and 12 assists as the Spurs ran their record to 25-4 since Jan. 24.

Heat 115, Warriors 111: At Miami, after the Heat scored 26 unanswered points in the first quarter, Miami needed Kevin Gamble's free throws with 8.5 seconds left to preserve a victory over the Golden State Warriors.

Glen Rice paced Miami with 22 points but missed four free throws in the final 21.2 seconds to give the Warriors an opportunity to tie a game in which they had trailed by 32 in the third quarter.

Latrell Sprewell scored 37, including 21 in the fourth quarter, for Golden State. Chris Mullin added 20, all but four in the second half.

Pacers 103, Kings 96: At Indianapolis, Rick Smith scored 31 points and Reggie Miller hit four free throws with 7.5 seconds remaining as the Indiana Pacers defeated the Sacramento Kings.

It was Indiana's fifth consecutive home win and seventh straight victory over the Kings. Mitch Richmond had 30 points for Sacramento, which is winless at Indiana since Nov. 20, 1986.

Miller finished with 16 points, while Dale Davis had 16 rebounds and four blocks for Indiana.

RESULTS

Cleveland	75	Atlanta	74
Indiana	103	Sacramento	96
Miami	115	Golden State	111
Boston	107	Philadelphia	75
San Antonio	111	Minnesota	97
Orlando	106	Chicago	99
Houston	99	Phoenix	97
Seattle	122	Portland	118
LA Lakers	113	Washington	103



NBA star Michael Jordan of the Chicago Bulls (centre) tries to get rid of the ball under pressure by Orlando Magic centre Shaquille O'Neal (left) and Nick Anderson.

Players, racket-makers to attend summit meeting

LONDON (R) — Leading players and racket manufacturers have been invited to a pre-Wimbledon summit meeting to discuss ways of lessening the impact of new technology on tennis.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) announced on Friday that representatives from the men's and women's tours and the equipment manufacturers would attend the meeting the week before Wimbledon in June to debate the effects powerful modern rackets have on the pro game.

"We think the time has come when, although these rackets are very good for players of lower standard, we've got to consider everybody," said an ITF spokesman.

"We've been talking a lot already but we thought we ought to get all the interested parties together."

"Basically we are looking at ways to make the game more entertaining."

There was widespread criticism during Wimbledon last year that the men's game, especially on grass courts, had become boring.

The ITF have also announced that 16 wild card places will be available in the men's and women's at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

A maximum of four players from any one country will be allowed to compete in the 64-draw singles events, with one pair from each country permitted in the doubles.

The singles draw format will attempt to ensure that players from the same country do not meet in the first round.

TODAY	Cinema Tel.: 634144	Cinema Tel.: 699238	Cinema Tel.: 677420	Cinema Tel.: 618274 - 618275	Nabil Al Mashini Theatre Tel.: 675571	Nabil & Hisham's Tel.: 625125
	PHILADELPHIA	PLAZA	CONCORD	AMMOUN THEATRE	ANLAN THEATRE	ANLAN THEATRE
	Tom Hanks in Forrest Gump Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15	Andy Garcia — Mee Ryan in When A Man Loves A Woman Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:30, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD '1' Comedian star: Adel Imam — Bakht & Andaleeb Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00 CONCORD '2' Jean-Claude Van Damme STREET FIGHTER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:45, 11:00	Musa Hijazin "Sum'a" in the political satire Hi Citizen written and directed by Mohammad Al Shawaf daily on 8:30 p.m. The theatre closes on Monday — Haifa Al Agha in the children's play ☆☆ Sadi's Return ☆☆	Presents Abu Awwad in the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Presents: The political satire: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m. For reservation, please call 625155 The theatre is closed Saturdays & Sundays

Evert, Navratilova, Goolagong and King in Legends Tour

NOOSA HEADS, Australia (AP) — After a career of hitting tennis balls over a net, two-time Wimbledon champion Evonne Goolagong Cawley spent Saturday trying to keep balls from entering one.

The 43-year-old was in front of a soccer net — for the warmup only — as goalkeeper for her Noosa Blues women's team.

On Wednesday, Goolagong Cawley will leave Australia for Naples, Fla., where she will spend time with friends before competing in the women's legends tour beginning April 7 in nearby Tampa. She decided against playing in Saturday's soccer match in case she turned an ankle or twisted a knee before the tennis tour.

In the six-tournament tennis legends series, Goolagong Cawley will join Chris Evert, Martina Navratilova, Billie Jean King, Virginia Wade, Tracy Austin and others in

doubles play.

"I haven't seen Chris or Martina for three or four years, so I'm really looking forward to it," she said.

Goolagong Cawley, putting on soccer goalkeeper's gloves, switched sports for a moment, attempting to block shots — most of the time successful — from teammates and some players on the men's team of the same name.

"Don't make me move too quick, if I do something to my leg I'll never forgive you," Goolagong Cawley shouted out to her American-born daughter, Kelly, 17, a teammate on the blues.

Goolagong Cawley and her husband, British-born Roger Cawley, Kelly and son Morgan, 13, moved back to her native Australia in December 1991 after living for 17 years in the United States.

The soccer team is sponsored by publisher Phil Jar-

ratt, co-author of Goolagong's book, "Home, The Evonne Goolagong Story," which was published in 1993. Jaratt is editor of the local popular magazine "Noosa Blue."

Goolagong Cawley settled in Noosa Heads, about 150 kilometres (93 miles) north of Brisbane, and lives for the most part out of the limelight. Last year, she decided to join the soccer team when it became starved for players.

"I really enjoy it because it's something new and I had to learn the rules to another game," she said. "Everybody wanted me to play so I thought I'd give it a go."

But tennis will again occupy her mind within a few weeks.

"I was really surprised when they (tournament organizers) called," says the still-fit Goolagong Cawley. "I guess I'll find out what kind of shape I'm in."

Ahmad Al Daoud wins National Rally title

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Ahmad Al Daoud and Mahmoud Metwalli received their first auto sport title of the season as the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) Saturday announced the final results of the Diet Pepsi National Rally.

Daoud, who had finished second in last year's Jordan Drivers' Championship, drove his Renault 5 GT Turbo to victory with a time of 53 minutes and 28 seconds.

1994 champions Bashar Bustami with co-driver Malek Hariri in a Ford Sierra 4x4 came in second with a time of 57m 54 seconds, while Mohammad Al Daoud and Khaled Zakaria in a Ford Fiesta XR3i finished third with a time of 1 hour 05 minutes.

Only 11 out of an original 18 starters finished the 231 kilometre rally which was held on desert tracks south

of Amman Friday. The route is identical to the first day of the Kingdom's most prestigious auto sports event — the Jordan International Rally which will be held in mid-May.

The rally witnessed a series of upsets and withdrawals early on as Hasan Abu Samra, Ihab Al Shurafa, Islam Al Sharia and Mazen Shoman quit in the first special stage at Tunaib in which Bashar Bustami led.

Ahmad Al Daoud took

the lead in the second special stage at Salaty followed by his brother Mohammad Al Daoud and Zeid Asfour.

Ahmad Mihyar withdrew in the third special stage while Mohammad Juma' was disqualified when he violated rally regulations by changing his co-driver.

The Kingdom's titleholder, Bustami, had the fastest in the final special stage Tunaib B, enabling him to advance his position to finish second overall.

FINAL RESULTS

1. Ahmad Al-Daoud	Mahmoud Metwalli Renault 5 GT Tur-
2. Bashar Bustami	bo
3. Moh'd Al-Daoud	Khaled Zakaria Ford Sierra 4x4
4. Asim Aref	Ramzi Mansour Ford Fiesta XR2i
5. Saleh Al-Baba	Nabil Al-Kurdi Ford Fiesta XR2i
6. Zeid Asfour	M o h a m m a d Mitsubishi
7. Omar Al-Qirm	Khayyat Volvo 244
8. Fayek Sayegh	Moh'd Al-Rayyan Ford Fiesta XR2i
9. Muhammad Freihat	Zeid Bu Zeid Ford Fiesta XR2i
10. Samah Gannaz	Bilal Salaman Land Rover
11. George Shammou	Amjed Abu Jamous Toyota Corolla GT
	Tayseer Hamo Seat Ibiza

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — Mike Tyson, freed Saturday after three years in prison for rape, departed for home after visiting a Muslim mosque for services in his new faith.

The former world heavyweight champion was released just before sunrise, returning to freedom wearing a Muslim prayer cap and going directly to the nearby Islamic Centre of North America.

"I'm very happy to be out and on my way home," a statement from Tyson said. "I want to thank everyone for their support. I will have more to say in the future. I'll see you all soon."

Tyson, who turns 29 on June 30, served the minimum three-year sentence for the 1991 rape of beauty pageant contestant Desiree Washington.

Tyson was surrounded by bodyguards and accompanied by promoter Don King as he walked from the Indiana Youth Centre to a waiting limousine.

Only a brief glimpse of Tyson was seen and that was mainly his head, atop which was a white Muslim covering. Tyson had been baptized a Christian by Reverend Jesse Jackson.

"As long as there's a relationship with God, that's the main thing," said Reverend Charles Williams, a Tyson confidant during his prison stay. "Whatever Mike wants, we're happy for him."

Tyson would follow in the

footsteps of Cassius Clay as a former champion forced out of the ring for three prime years of his career who converted to Muslim during his layoff. Clay was banned from boxing for draft evasion.

Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali 25 years ago and regained his world title. Tyson reportedly will change his name to Malik Abdul Aziz. In Arabic, Malik means "king" or "ruler" while Abdul Aziz means "servant of the mighty."

One of the people who attended the prayer service said about 400 worshippers were there. They said a special prayer of thanksgiving for Tyson.

About 200 journalists from around the world flanked both sides of the main entrance to the prison to chronicle Tyson's 6:15 a.m. (11:15 GMT) release. Four helicopters were following Tyson's journey from the moment of his release. Tyson's entourage reached 110 mph (176 km/h) on interstate highways.

Skies were clear and temperatures were near freezing as Tyson entered the limousine. He bypassed an outdoor prayer vigil across the street from the prison, which quickly dispersed once it was clear Tyson was not going to appear.

Tyson spent about 45 minutes at the mosque and was then driven to nearby Indianapolis International Airport. He caught a private jet

for Southington, Ohio, and his mansion estate there.

"The man has paid his dues and it's time to welcome him home," said Ruth Bernard, a neighbour of Tyson's in the Cleveland suburb where yellow ribbons adorned trees in anticipation of Tyson's homecoming.

Pam Pattison, a spokesman for the Indiana Department of Corrections, said Tyson's entourage surrounded his exit from the prison because they were concerned about safety risks.

"They were concerned about some issues and whatever people might want to get to Mr. Tyson," she said, adding that no threats against Tyson were known to law-enforcement officials.

Ken Simmons, one of Tyson's bodyguards, said Tyson's mood as he was freed was "pure excitement. The adrenalin is flowing. He missed freedom. Maybe what he found in prison helped him come together. It's not so much physical, though he is in good shape. It's mental. He grew."

Tyson's release gave no hint as to which of the many multi-million-dollar offers he might take for his first fight in four years. But King was his constant companion in his first hours of freedom and should play a major role in his boxing future.

"Next to life, liberty is the most important thing," King said. "I'm happy to see Mike getting out."

Prison officials said Tyson slept well Friday night and was reading Ring Magazine when guards came to end his 1,095-day prison stay.

Tyson's return came six days after Michael Jordan returned to basketball in this same Midwestern city.

Tyson has not fought since taking a 12-round decision over Razor Ruddock on June 28, 1991. Tyson has a 41-1 record with 36 knockouts, losing only to Buster Douglas in 1990 at Tokyo.

Tyson, prisoner number 922335 no longer, is required to pay for mandatory psychotherapy and perform 100 hours of community service. A four-year probation will be supervised by Ohio officials, but will not prevent Tyson from boxing.

Opinion on Tyson divided on race lines

As Mike Tyson was released from prison Saturday, a new opinion poll showed that his conviction for rape still divided black and white Americans.

The CNN poll found that 73 per cent of black Americans believed the former world heavyweight champion did not get a fair hearing in 1992, when he was tried for the 1991 rape of 18-year-old beauty pageant contestant Desiree Washington.

Only 30 per cent of whites surveyed believed Tyson's trial was unfair. Washington admitted

going to Tyson's hotel room, but said she did not consent to have sex.

In Dayton, Ohio, one member of the jury that convicted Tyson told a local newspaper that he and four other jurors now had doubts about the verdict, based on things he had read since the trial.

Juror David Vahle, 58, said he and the other jurors had gotten together a couple of times after the trial and discussed the case.

"There's five of us that have reasonable doubt, hindsight, and I'm one of them," Vahle said. "We were in deliberation and were split six to six. I was convinced that he was guilty without a reasonable doubt, no question."

"What I heard after the trial, then there's a reasonable doubt."

Jurors were not told during the trial that three possible defense witnesses who were not allowed to testify claimed to have seen Tyson and Washington embrace in the boxer's limousine.

Vahle said he also became less sure after reading that Washington had a financial deal with a civil lawyer, contrary to her testimony.

"As far as I was concerned, she was the purest virgin walking down the street," Vahle said on Washington. "She hardly held hands with anybody. Afterwards, whoops, maybe she's not the purest thing after all."

Agassi, Sampras in Lipton final

KEY BISCAYNE, Florida (AP) — The best rivalry in tennis took a twist Friday when Andre Agassi led cheers for Pete Sampras.

Both won in three sets and advanced to Sunday's final at the Lipton Championships, their third meeting this year.

Agassi earned his victory first, playing a flawless third-set tiebreaker to beat Swede Magnus Larsson 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (7-1).

Then, during an interview over the public address system, Agassi encouraged the spectators to stay and support Sampras, leading them in a chant of "Pete Pete Pete."

"You need to cheer for Pete tonight for two reasons," Agassi told the crowd. "He's my Davis Cup teammate, and I want a piece of him in the final."

Agassi got his wish a few hours later, when Sampras beat another Swede, Jonas Bjorkman, 4-6, 6-0, 6-1.

Sampras, seeking his third consecutive Lipton title, beat Agassi in last year's final. Both of their meetings this year came in a final, with Agassi winning at the Australian Open and Sampras winning at Indian Wells.

"We're both playing good tennis," Sampras said. "It's going to be a great match for the fans. The contrast of styles should result in some good tennis, and hopefully I can come through."

Regardless of this weekend's results, Sampras will remain ranked No. 1 for the 100th week overall and the 81st consecutive week. Agassi is ranked second.

No. 2 Steffi Graf, seeking her fourth Lipton title, will face No. 9 Kimiko Date of Japan in the women's final. Date, who reached the final



World No. 2 Andre Agassi

despite a strained rotator cuff, has won only one set in four previous matches against Graf.

The unseeded Bjorkman started well against Sampras, converting the only break point to take the first set. But Sampras won the next 10 games and served better as the match progressed, hitting six aces in the third set.

Agassi blamed windy weather and questionable rulings for his close call against the 6-foot-3 Larsson, who is ranked 16th.

"I would have to say that is absolutely one of the worst officiating matches," Agassi

said. "It just seemed like the linesmen were missing calls all over the place."

A swirling wind, Agassi said, made it difficult to gauge shots.

"Wind is an incredible equalizer," he said. "It takes two people, and one might be clearly better, and it makes it very unpredictable. I felt that's what happened today."

Larsson, who beat Agassi in December in the Grand Slam Cup, lodged no complaints about the linesmen or weather.

"It was a hit gust," he said, "but I can't blame the wind."

Agassi saved his best tennis for the tiebreaker, stinging service returning and keeping Larsson off-balance. Larsson, who lost the final seven points, made four unforced errors and double-faulted at 1-3.

"Great returns," Larsson said. "I didn't feel tight at all. He just returned the ball well."

Agassi had no break-point chances in the final two sets. Larsson mixed the pace of his serves and groundstrokes and became the first player to win a set against Agassi in the tournament.

Agassi, serving and trailing

5-6 in the third set, was at deuce and within two points of losing the match. But Agassi served an ace, then hit a spectacular passing shot — a running, cross-court forehand — to win the game and force the tiebreaker.

With a victory that took 2 hours, 11 minutes, Agassi improved to 46-4 dating back to last year's U.S. Open.

"Now he has a chance to be No. 1, and he's not giving away any points, or any matches," Larsson said. "If you make 50 aces and 50 forehand winners, you can beat him. It is not so easy to do."

IOC: Canadian doctor should take doping blame

LAUSANNE (R) — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) called on Friday for an "exemplary sanctions" against Canada's team doctor for allowing a Canadian rower to fail a dope test at the Pan-Am Games.

In a rare public statement on a non-Olympic doping case, the IOC even hinted that the punishment could be a life ban from sport.

The call came from Prince Alexandre de Merode, the veteran chief of the IOC medical commission, who said it was "beyond question" that the doctor was to blame for the incident.

Organisers of the games in Argentina announced on Thursday that they were stripping Canada of their gold medal in the women's quadruple sculls because Silken Laumann, a respected member of the winning quartet, tested positive for the banned drug pseudoephedrine after Sunday's race.

Canadian team officials in Mar Del Plata protested,

saying it had been a case of inadvertent doping which did not merit any sanctions. Team doctor Jeff Robinson said Laumann had bought the wrong medicine for a severe cold.

In a statement released by the IOC, De Merode said: "The doctor's responsibility is beyond question and an exemplary sanctions applied to this doctor, who has no excuse, is appropriate."

"The tolerated epinephrine level is between 0.5 of a gram and one gram, whereas in this particular case the athlete was tested with over 3.5 grams."

"It is for the international rowing societies federation (FISA) to apply a sanction against the doctor."

De Merode, a Belgian who has headed the commission for more than quarter of a century, pointedly noted that during the Innsbruck winter games of 1976 the IOC medical commission had struck a Czech doctor off its list for life for administering codeine to an ice hockey player.

Tests point to CSKA poisoning

MOSCOW (AFP) — Five basketball players with CSKA Moscow who fell ill shortly before a European Championship match in Greece were probably poisoned, according to tests carried out by Russian experts.

Samples from the mineral water which players drank before the game against Olympiakos on March 16 contained traces of haloperidol, a substance which causes cramps, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported on Friday.

The five were taken to hospital suffering from acute stomach pains and convulsions.

CSKA had to play the match with only five men and were down to three for the last 10 minutes. The Russians lost 79-54.

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ONE AT A TIME

North-South vulnerable North	North	East	South	West
deals.	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
NORTH	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• A 9 C	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• Q 4 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• K J 8	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• 4 2	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
WEST	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• E 8 7 6 4	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• 7 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• Q 10 9 8	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• 7 6 3	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
SOUTH	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• 10 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• A 7 6	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• Q 10 2	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
• A K J 5	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Seven of ♠. New Yorker Alvin Roth, one of the world's elite great players and bridge theoreticians, has moved from the Big Apple to Boca Raton, Fla. The good news is that he is back in the competitive world, no doubt proposing innovations that will be in everyone's arsenal in a few years, just as his 1950s' ideas form the basis of much of modern bidding. North's double of two spades was

negative, for takeout. The decision whether or not to raise South's three hearts to game was borderline, but the prime values in spades and diamonds made the raise attractive.

A spade attack would have left declarer with no resource—two trump losers plus a spade and a diamond would have been inevitable. The diamond lead gave Roth a chance which he was quick to seize. East won the ace of diamonds and shifted to the queen of spades, taken by the ace. Declarer saw that, if

West's distribution was specifically 6-1-2-4, the contract could be brought home.

One round of trumps was drawn with the ace, then three diamonds were cashed for a spade discard from the closed hand. There followed in quick order a spade ruff, the ace and king of clubs and a club ruff, bringing declarer's trick total to nine. When the last spade was led from the table, East, down to nothing but trumps was forced to ruff and fall into an endplay. Dummy's queen of trumps became the fulfilling trick.

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Arabs in 'extremely bad way' — Arab League chief

CAIRO (Agencies) — Esmat Abdul Meguid, secretary general of the Arab League, Saturday called the state of the Arab World "extremely bad" in the wake of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"The situation of the Arabs is extremely bad and I hold all Arab parties responsible for the state we are in," he told the Egyptian government weekly October.

Dr. Abdul Meguid said conflicts between Arab states following the Gulf crisis remained "the most dangerous challenge facing unified Arab action."

He urged Iraq to "implement all the U.N. Security Council resolutions."

A campaign for Arab reconciliation, launched in August 1993, met approval from 14 Arab countries, including Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, Dr. Abdul Meguid told the magazine published Saturday.

But Saudi Arabia had not yet responded, the secretary general said, adding that Kuwait demanded implementation by Iraq of Security Council resolutions "to wipe out all traces of the Iraqi aggression" before any reconciliation.

He added that while the Arab League should take a position on sanctions imposed on Baghdad, "it must be clear that the Iraqi leadership is the cause" of its people's deprivations.

He pointed to other border disputes throughout the Arab World, especially between Egypt and Sudan, Qatar and Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Dr. Abdul Meguid also blamed the warring factions in Somalia for the deteriorating situation there. He called militia leader Mohammed Farah Aidid "an arrogant man confident in his strength" while his rival Ali Mahdi Mohammed "is more moderate."

He added that the direct Arab boycott of Israel "will

continue as long as the peace process is not completed."

Dr. Abdul Meguid criticised the "rush" of Arab states to normalise relations with Israel, saying "it is Israel that should be rushing towards the Arabs."

The comments came two days after meeting in Cairo of 22 Arab League foreign ministers, who avoided divisive topics such as sanctions against Iraq and inter-Arab reconciliation.

Morocco's King Hassan has said many Arab states would lift the economic boycott of Israel if the Arab League gave them the green light to do so.

King Hassan, in an interview with the French newspaper Le Monde published on Saturday, said he had told U.S. President Bill Clinton that since the boycott of Israel was imposed by the Arab League it should be lifted by the organisation.

"If, for example, (the league) decided to free up each member to make its own decision, many countries would certainly lift the boycott," said the monarch, who for a decade has been an influential mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

King Hassan, 65 years old and on the throne for 34 years, also called on Israel to overcome its fear of Arab countries and sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"I think it is time for Israel to change its outlook. The peace process has started and it is irreversible," he was quoted as saying.

"Israel must no longer appear as being the small state that will forever be under attack, this is a negative attitude... drop this attitude of fearful men who keep saying 'they will slaughter me'," he said.

Egypt has refused to sign the NPT until Israel, which is widely believed to have a nuclear arsenal, does so.

Syria criticised the Arab League for failing to adopt a

unified position that forced Arab states not to sign the NPT unless Israel does.

"It is really painful that the Arab League adopts a decision leaving individual Arab states free to sign or not sign the treaty," the government daily Al Thawra said.

It also blasted the United States for urging Arab states to sign the NPT regardless of the Israeli position and said this was an example of the "ugly double standard."

"The U.S. insistence on this matter is a kind of humiliation and a treatment of Arabs as second hand countries," Al Thawra said.

Arab foreign ministers said on Thursday at the end of an Arab League meeting in Cairo it was dangerous and unacceptable that Israel remains outside the global treaty that aims to curb the spread of nuclear weapons but failed to agree what they should do if it persists in refusing to sign it.

Several ministers who attended the meeting said in separate statements individual Arab states were left free to adopt the decision they want when the treaty comes up for renewal at U.N. conference opening in New York next month.

Al Thawra said the Arab League decision was a blow to Arab solidarity and "an encouragement for Arabs to adopt separate decisions on a matter which affects their national existence."

"Arabs are now facing a very critical matter which affects their national and individual security."

"They (Arabs) should either confront it collectively and say no to the world which wants us to kill ourselves by our own decision and signature, or submit individually and sign," Al Thawra said.

Syria and Egypt insisted on Thursday they were sticking to their position that they could not vote for an indefinite extension of the NPT unless Israel agrees to sign.

Regent visits GHQ

HIS ROYAL Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, on Saturday visited the Armed Forces General Headquarters where he was received by chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Miral, the chief of staff of the royal land forces and the army inspector general. Prince Abdullah discussed with Gen. Miral issues of concern to the Armed Forces (Armed Forces photo)



Arafat opens offices for self-rule polls in Jericho

JERICHO (R) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat said on Saturday his self-rule authority would be ready to hold delayed elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip immediately after an Israeli troop redeployment.

"We are ready to hold our elections starting from today," Mr. Arafat told reporters as he inaugurated election offices in self-ruled Jericho.

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) member Saeb Erekat said he would meet Israeli negotiator Yoel Singer in Jericho on Sunday to discuss elections and prepare for further talks in Cairo on Tuesday.

Israel and the PLO have set a July 1 deadline for finishing talks on holding elections and expanding self-rule from the Gaza Strip and Jericho to the rest of the occupied West Bank.

But Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Thursday that implementation depended on Mr. Arafat curbing attacks on Israelis by opponents of the peace agreement.

Mr. Arafat said according to the 1993 PLO-Israel peace deal, Palestinian elections would take place immediately after Israel withdrew its forces from West Bank population centres.

He accused Israel of delaying an agreement on pulling out its troops ahead of elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and called for an acceleration of the process.

"Elections should have been held last July according to the accord. Already there is a nine-month delay which is more than enough," the PLO leader said.

"We have to hurry up with elections and carry them out very soon because elections mean stability and show the whole world what the situation in our land is and demonstrate our insistence on

continuing with the peace process," he said.

Mr. Arafat arrived in Jericho from Gaza on Friday, his second visit since his return from exile last July, to meet U.S. Vice-President Al Gore.

Mr. Gore, who witnessed the signing of a U.S. aid package to help the financially-strapped PNA create jobs, pledged U.S. political and economic support for the faltering Israeli-PLO accord.

Mr. Arafat said: "We have asked the Americans to help us in pushing the Israelis towards a quick implementation of the agreement."

Mr. Arafat said a future meeting between himself and Mr. Rabin on redeployment and elections "depends on whether Israel wants honest and quick implementation of what has been agreed upon."

Dr. Erekat, member of the PNA in charge of elections and local government, showed Mr. Arafat ballot machines and offices equipped to handle elections for a Palestinian council in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We have 5,000 Palestinians trained now to administer 1,500 polling stations and have opened 16 election offices in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," Dr. Erekat said.

"We are 95 per cent ready to hold elections. From the day President Arafat signs an agreement with Israel on redeployment and elections we need 60 days to hold elections in order to issue voting cards, deal with complaints, candidacy and campaigning," he said.

Mr. Arafat also witnessed the signing of an agreement between the PNA and Germany's representative in Jericho, Martin Kohler, to provide German aid for sewage systems in the West Bank and a grant for a Palestinian development bank.

"The building process is just beginning and we have a long way to go but it is good to start," Mr. Arafat said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

7th batch graduates from Royal War College

AMMAN (Petra) — Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Abdul Hafez Miral on Saturday attended the graduation of the seventh course of the Royal War College. Gen. Miral delivered an address in which he congratulated the graduating officers who received masters degrees in military sciences and conveyed to them the greetings of His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. He said it was a source of hope to have officers from Arab countries attending the course. The commander of the college also delivered an address in which he said despite the peace process in the region, the role of the Armed Forces will remain focal in the national strategy. He said King Hussein was keen to support the Armed Forces and supply it with all needed equipment to enable it to face the challenges of the future with confidence.

King condolences Hanania family

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputising for His Majesty King Hussein, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid on Saturday visited the house of Senator Daoud Hanania to condole him and the Hanania family over the death of his father, former minister Anas Hanania who passed away Thursday at the age of 92. On Friday, the King delegated Amman Governor Talast Al Nawaisch to attend the funeral of Mr. Hanania. His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah, the Regent, delegated the director of Amman police brigadier, Adel Al Armon, to attend the funeral and condole the family.

99.3% success in anti-polio drive

AMMAN (Petra) — A total of 672,829 children aged under five received doses of the anti-polio vaccine during the first stage of a polio immunisation campaign launched by the Ministry of Health last week. The number accounts for 99.3 per cent of the targeted age group, the Ministry of Health said. The percentage of those who received the vaccination compared to the number of the targeted group in Amman was 93 per cent and Karak 98.5 per cent; in the rest of the governorates it was 100 per cent. The second dose of the vaccine will be offered in the period April 22-27.

Hillary Clinton visits Egypt's pyramids

CAIRO (AP) — First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, inspired by a visit to the pyramids last year, took her daughter Chelsea on a tour of Egypt's most famous monuments Saturday. After seeing the pyramids and the nearby Sphinx and solar boat, Mrs. Clinton was asked which she liked best. "All of them," she said, laughing. Chelsea took a brief ride on a camel while U.S. embassy officials tried to block photographers from taking pictures of her on the ungainly beasts. Mrs. Clinton and 15-year-old Chelsea stopped for the tour en route to Pakistan, spending about an hour on the Giza plateau just outside Cairo. The first lady saw 4,500-year-old monuments during a visit with President Clinton last October. Zahi Hawass, the Egyptian archaeologist in charge of the Giza plateau, quoted Mrs. Clinton as saying she returned to show her daughter the ancient wonders.

Kuwait newspaper raps Singapore

KUWAIT (R) — A newspaper in Kuwait, where 50,000 Philippine nationals work, rapped Singapore on Saturday for executing a Filipino made convicted of murder and said the island state should have responded to appeals for mercy. "Viva Ramos, Viva Contemplation," the English-language Arab Times said in a front-page editorial. It was referring to Philippines President Fidel Ramos, who has downgraded relations with Singapore over the execution earlier this month of mother-of-four Flor Contemplation. "It must be so nice to be perfect. To be so certain of one's own infallibility that a request to delay an execution for the consideration of new evidence, and a plea for mercy, can be dismissed as an affront to national pride and sovereignty," the newspaper said. "No room for doubt between the gross national product and a market index in a society on the fast track to perfection. No room for mercy when the bottom line can wipe a conscience clean."

Egyptian police kill 4 militants

MINYA (AFP) — Security forces shot dead four members of the outlawed Islamic group Gamaa Al Islamiyah in dawn raids in the southern Egyptian provinces of Minya and Qena on Saturday, police said. State security men in Minya backed by anti-terrorist units killed two military leaders of the Gamaa during a raid on their hideout in Bani Mohammad village, 180 kilometres south of Cairo. A large quantity of explosives and an automatic rifle were discovered in the house, the police added. In Qena, 590 kilometres south of Cairo, police killed two other Gamaa members, one of them 19 years old. The two fugitives had opened fire with automatic weapons on the police in a graveyard in Naga Hammada village. The attacks raised to 693 the number of deaths in the three-year confrontation between the state and Islamic hardliners, which has centred in Minya province since last summer.

Velayati begins Asian tour today

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati is to travel to China on Sunday on the first leg of a four-nation Asian tour, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported on Saturday. Mr. Velayati will discuss economic, social and cultural cooperation when he meets with officials in China, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia, it said. The agency gave no precise details but Iran is trying to expand its ties with the outside world to counter a U.S. policy of political and economic containment of the Islamic republic.

Rabin accuses Likud of helping militant groups

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has accused right-wing Likud of collaborating with militants to try and derail Israel's peace agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu responded Saturday by alleging that Mr. Rabin was "losing his marbles," in attacking fellow Israelis instead of cradling extremism.

The angry exchange showed the pressure Mr. Rabin was under to prove to the Israeli public that peace was working despite a string of shootings and bombings that have killed 58 Israelis since October. Opinion polls have shown Mr. Rabin lagging behind Mr. Netanyahu in popularity since the wave of attacks began.

Mr. Rabin told Israel Television Friday that Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the groups blamed for most recent attacks, are killing Israelis in an attempt to cut public support for the 1993 Israeli-PLO accord and in turn foil the agreement.

"They are succeeding because the Likud has turned into a collaborator of Hamas and Islamic Jihad," Mr. Rabin said.

He said that whenever attacks occur, Likud leaders blame the government and the peace deal with the PLO, although the PLO has stopped attacking Israelis.

Shai Bazar, a spokesman for Mr. Netanyahu, rejected the criticism and accused Mr. Rabin of "apparently losing

his marbles. Instead of displaying an aggressive policy against terrorism, he is conducting policy of hesitancy, concessions and gestures toward the terrorist organisations."

Mr. Rabin also accused previous right-wing governments of creating "perpetual friction," by planting Jewish settlements in or near Arab cities in the West Bank.

He noted the city of Hebron where about 450 Israelis live among 110,000 Palestinians, and said that it "requires more soldiers than settlers to give them (the settlers) security."

Mr. Rabin also said he planned to stand again at next year's general elections when the premier is to be voted in directly for the first time.

Mr. Rabin told Israel Television: "I have been elected to my post to begin an historic peace process between Israel and its neighbours and I intend to complete this work."

"If time imperatives demand it I will put myself forward again as Labour Party candidate for the post of prime minister" at the elections in November 1996, he said.

Mr. Rabin added: "We have made a breakthrough toward peace. For the first time since the creation of Israel (in 1948) we are trying to resolve our most complex dispute, that between ourselves and the Palestinians, our immediate neighbours."

An opinion poll by the



Yitzhak Rabin

Dahaf Institute published Friday showed that if elections were to be held now, 40 per cent would vote for Mr. Rabin compared with 34 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu.

Asked about a planned security border between Israel and the Palestinian territories, Mr. Rabin said: "We don't want to dominate another people in the West Bank and Gaza territories."

"We want to protect the security of the Israelis by separating them from the Palestinians without causing economic damage to the latter and without returning to the former ceasefire lines from the June 1967 war."

Security chiefs have worked out a plan to patrol night and day a 340-kilometre border zone around the West Bank in a bid to stop Palestinians entering the Jewish state to attack Israelis.

Mr. Rabin insisted that "Israel must stay a Jewish state with a Palestinian entity alongside which is not a sovereign state." The left-wing Meretz Party called Friday for the creation of a Palestinian state.

A memorandum addressed to U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali was handed to Timor Goksel, spokesman for the U.N. peacekeeping force in South Lebanon.

The so-called "security zone" covers 1,100 square kilometres stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the foothills of Mount Hermon. It is garrisoned by 1,200 Israeli troops and 2,500 surrogate militiamen of the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

Parliamentary deputies, union leaders and politicians joined 200 fishermen from Tyre, Sidon and Sarafand in Saturday's demonstration.

"We beseech you to press Israel to lift its naval blockade as soon as possible and help Lebanon spread its authority over the whole of its lands," the petition said.

Israel imposed the blockade also to force Beirut to halt searches of travellers to and from its South Lebanon occupation zone.

Lebanese protest Israeli fishing ban

TYRE (Agencies) — Some 200 fishermen staged a sit-in Saturday at a United Nations office in this city to protest Israeli-imposed fishing restrictions along Lebanon's southern coast.

The fishermen complained that Israeli gunboats were preventing them from sailing beyond two kilometres off Tyre. Fish so close to the shore is scarce, they said, demanding U.N. intervention to abolish the ban.

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Yousef: Palestinians have right to bomb

NEW YORK (R) — The accused mastermind of the fatal World Trade Centre bombing said on Friday that U.S. support of Israel gives Palestinians and Lebanese the right to attack targets in the United States.

In a bizarre news conference, the lawyer representing Ramzi Yousef read a statement from the imprisoned defendant that seemed to provide a motive for the February 1993 bombing that killed six people and injured more than 1,000.

Court-appointed lawyer Roy Kulsar told reporters he had tried to discourage his client from releasing the statement but Yousef, who considers himself a political prisoner arrested for his beliefs, insisted on doing so.

"I explained that in making any kind of a statement that's in the first person, if he decides to testify at trial, he has said here what he has said here, what he has said here, what he has said here," Mr. Kulsar said.

He gave reporters two anti-Israel statements written by Yousef in which the defendant talks of friends and relatives killed by the Israeli army and says it is of "utmost importance" for the world to know that Muslims will never agree to give up Jerusalem.

"The systematic murder, torture, imprisonment and deportation is ongoing," Yousef said. "The ability of Israel to commit these crimes is the direct result of the considerable military and financial aid which the Un-

ited States of America provides annually to Israel.

"And it is this aid which gives Palestinians and Lebanese the right to attack U.S. targets," he said.

Yousef also said that his real name is Abdul Basit Balochi, that he is from Pakistan, and that he is a trained electronics engineer and explosives expert. He gave his birthdate as April 27, 1968.

The name Abdul-Basit was on the passport and the airplane ticket Yousef used to leave New York the day of the world trade centre blast.

Yousef was indicted with the four men who were convicted last year of carrying out the bombing.

He was one of the world's most wanted fugitives.

COLUMN

Clinton is in excellent health after exam

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton was pronounced in excellent health Friday after a routine physical exam that found he had lower cholesterol and possibly less body fat than a year ago, the White House said. "We are pleased to report that the president continues to demonstrate excellent health and vigour," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said, reading from a statement by Dr. E. Connie Mariano, the White House physician who headed the panel of military and civilian doctors examining Mr. Clinton. Mr. Clinton continues to suffer from "environmental allergies" but he repayed no other problems from the four-hour exam. It was Mr. Clinton's second annual check-up as president and took place at Bethesda Naval Hospital in suburban Washington. The 48-year-old president's blood pressure was normal at 120 over 80, his pulse was a healthy 55 beats per minute and his total cholesterol level, at 203, was in the normal range. "I believe that's down from last year," Mr. McCurry said of the cholesterol level, but he did not know the breakdown between "good" and "bad" types of cholesterol. Mr. McCurry said he thought Mr. Clinton's weight may be up slightly but "what we don't have is his body fat measure. It might be true that he has become somewhat more muscular in the last year. Good, he will need every bit of it."

Japan probe touches ocean floor at 10,911 metres

TOKYO (R) — The unmanned Japanese deep-sea probe Kaiko Friday reached the seabed of the Mariana Trench in the Western Pacific off Guam Island, the deepest point on the Ocean floor, but fell short of a new world depth record. The probe touched the seabed of the Challenger deep area of the trench at a depth of 10,911.4 metres (35,799 ft), about one metre (39 inches) short of the record set in 1960 by the Swiss-built, manned U.S. Navy bathyscaphe Trieste. But officials at the government-affiliated Japan Marine Science and Technology Centre (JAMSTEC), which conducted the probe, suggested the maximum depth of Challenger deep is only 10,911.4 metres, slightly less than originally measured in 1960. "Technology for measuring the depth of the seabed has improved drastically in the 35 years since the Trieste voyage," said JAMSTEC spokesman Tomiya Matsunaga. But JAMSTEC officials stopped short of disputing the world record, and instead pointed to Kaiko's success at filming small fish at the deepest point for the first time.

Blind mother sees again through dead son's eyes

FORT SMITH, Arkansas (AFP) — Four days after being killed in a traffic accident, teenager Christopher Colin's pledge to his blind mother that he would always be her eyes came true when she saw once again through his transplanted cornea. It was the first time in 12 years that Sally Colin had seen her two surviving children after losing her sight due to a degenerative eye disease. "It was unbelievable. My children, gosh they've grown. They're so big," she said after returning from the hospital. But her joy at seeing again was tempered by the death of her 15-year-old son who had been her right hand man as she struggled to bring up a young family blind and on public assistance. Christopher was killed Sunday when he was hit by a car a block from his home. He suffered severe head injuries and was declared brain dead the following day. His heart, liver, both kidneys and both lungs were donated after the country with one cornea going to his mother and a second to a 32-year-old man. "He kept his word," Sally Colin said before her operation. "He promised, 'Mama, I'll never leave you and I'll always be your eyes.'"

Iranians held in Kuwait protests

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian protesters in Kuwait City on Saturday were ordered to leave the country after a series of demonstrations against the Kuwaiti government. The protesters, who were part of a larger movement in the Gulf region, were seen in various locations, including the city center and near the airport. The Kuwaiti government expressed its concern over the protests and urged the protesters to return to their homes.

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